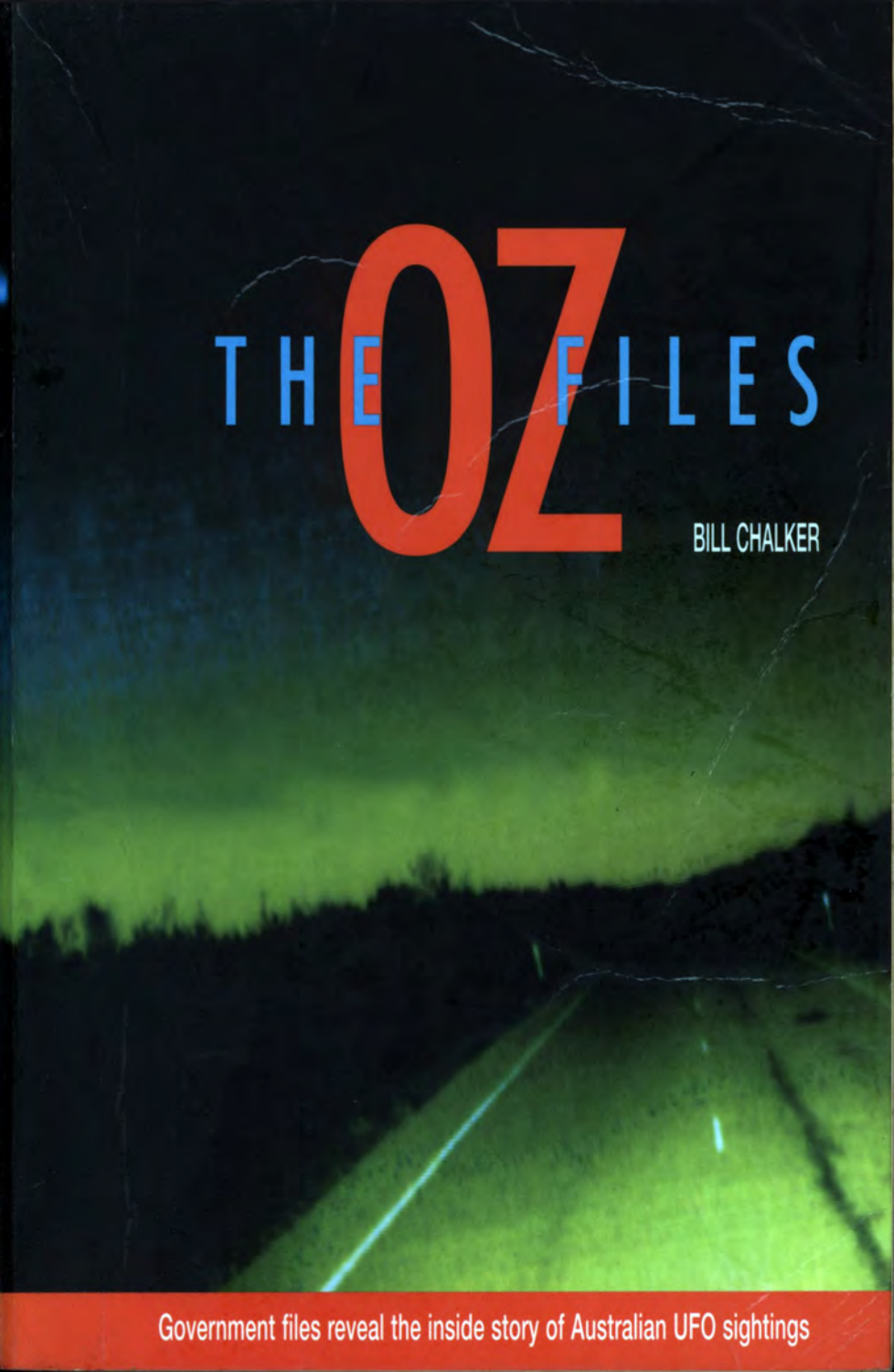
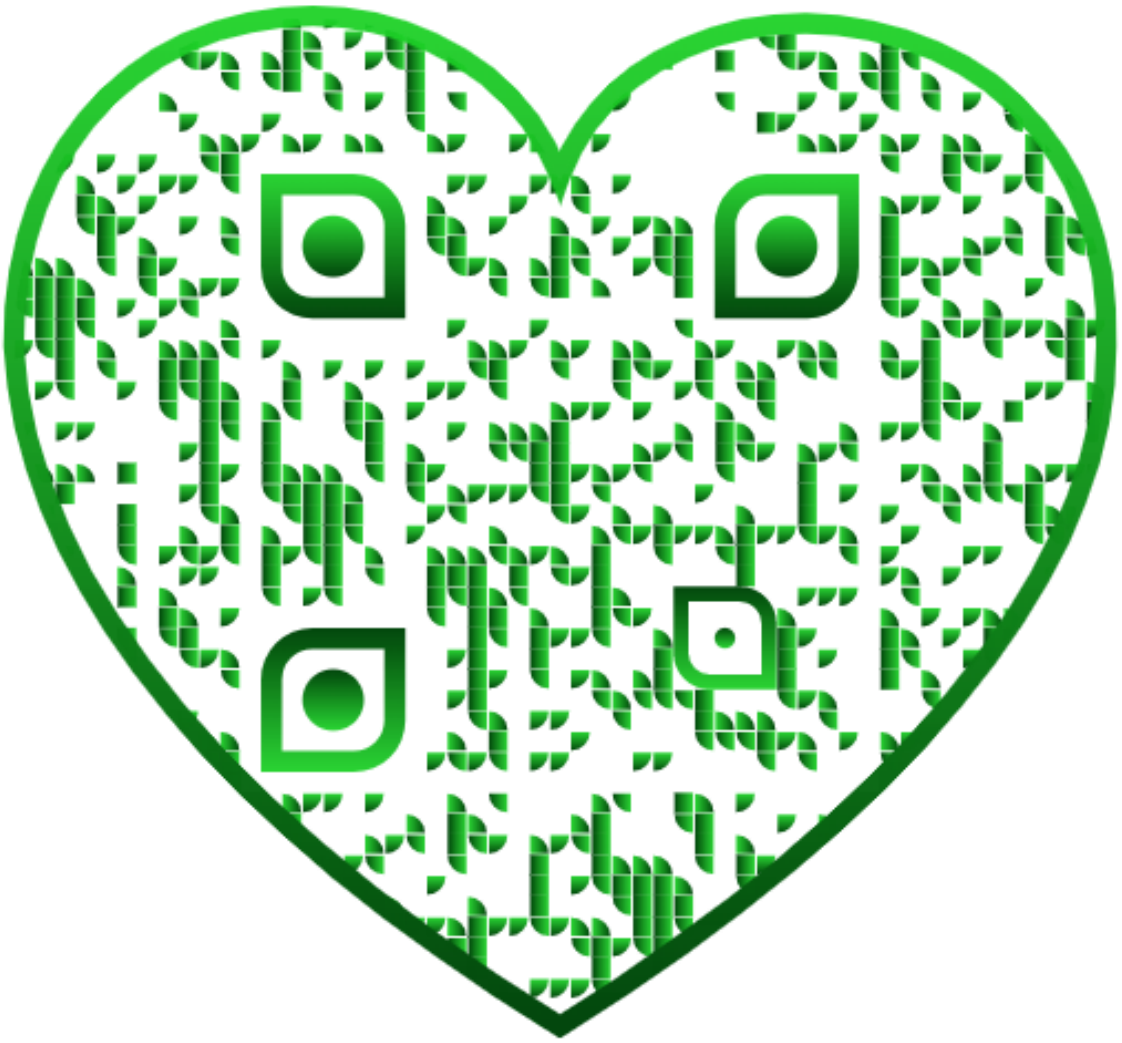
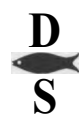

THE OZ FILES
BILL CHALKER
Government files reveal the inside story of Australian UFO sightings



THE OZ FILES

the Australian UFO story

Bill Chalker



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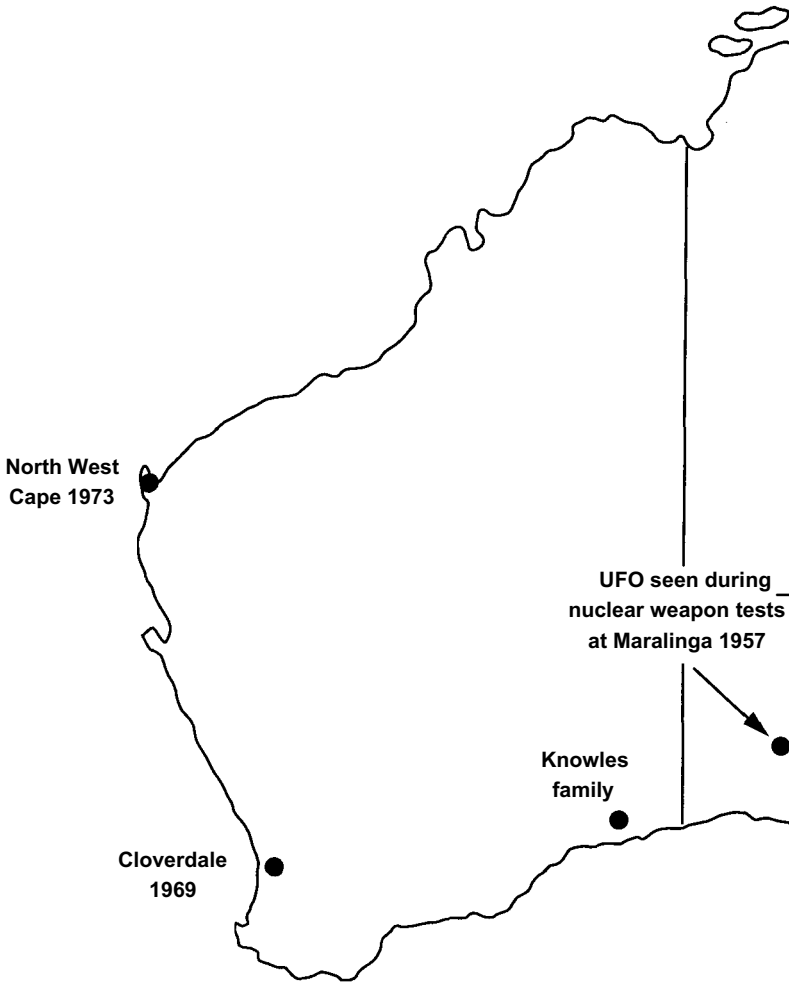
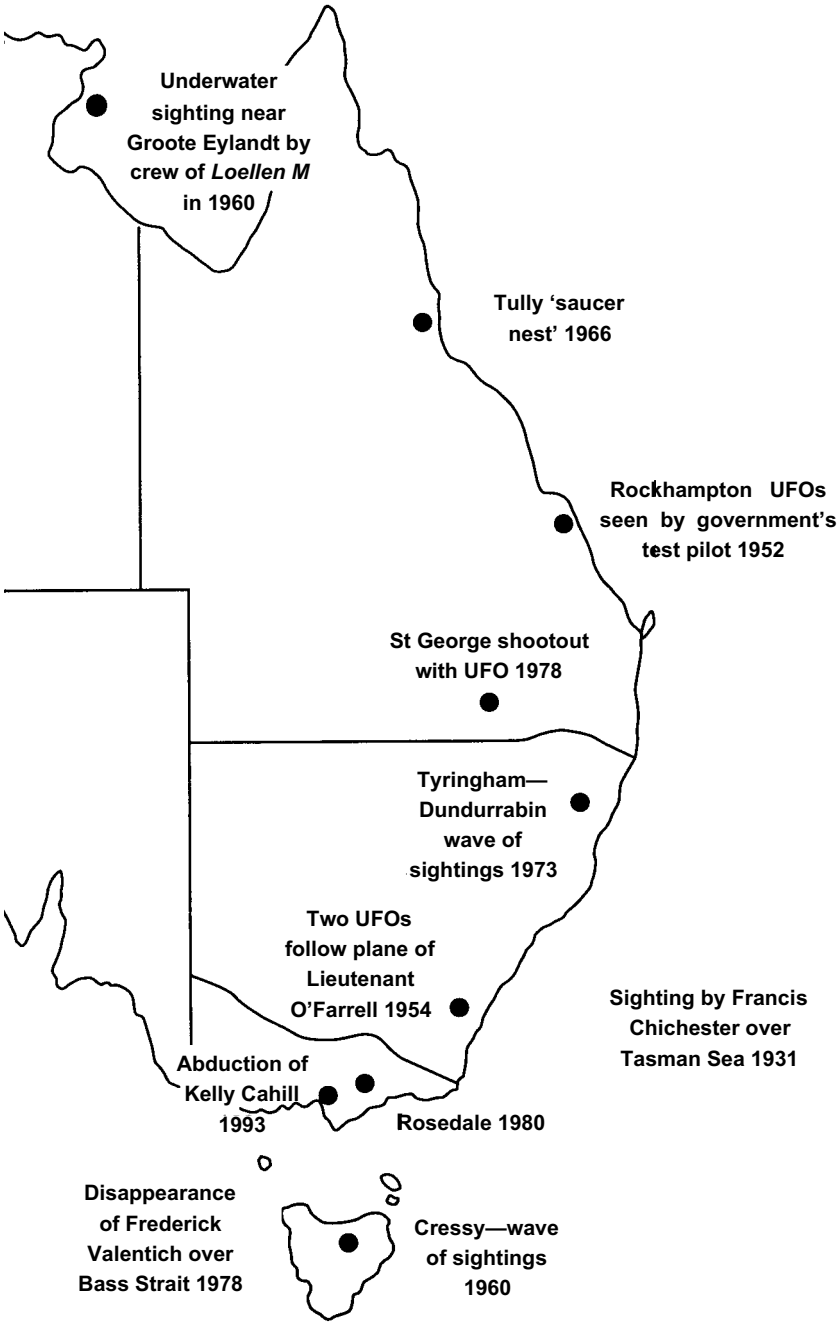


Sites of major UFO sightings and abductions in Australia


Underwater sighting near Groote Eylandt by crew of *Loellen M* in 1960
Tully 'saucer nest' 1966
Rockhampton UFOs seen by government's test pilot 1952
St George shootout with UFO 1978
Tyringham—Dundurrabin wave of sightings 1973
Two UFOs follow plane of Lieutenant O'Farrell 1954
Sighting by Francis Chichester over Tasman Sea 1931
Abduction of Kelly Cahill 1993
Rosedale 1980
Disappearance of Frederick Valentich over Bass Strait 1978
Cressy—wave of sightings 1960

INTRODUCTION

In 1988 a Saulwick opinion poll found that 42 per cent of Australian respondents believed in UFOs. The success of recent television series such as *The X-Files* suggests that this level of interest has persisted. Although much of it is sensationalist, there has always been a core of evidence which no one has been able to refute. Way back in 1955, when the term 'flying saucers', rather than 'UFOs', dominated popular discussion of the subject, one of Britain's greatest airmen, Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding, put the problem in terms that might appeal to many Australians. 'I have never seen a 'flying saucer'', he wrote, 'and yet I believe that they exist. I have never seen Australia, and yet I believe that Australia also exists. My belief in both cases is based upon cumulative evidence in such quantity that, for me at any rate, it brings complete conviction'. Others have not been so open-minded.

Despite the widespread hostility to the very idea of UFOs, especially by many in politics, the military, and science, the UFO enigma has persisted with a remarkable intensity for some five decades. For something that was originally cast as a short-lived, post-war fad, its persistence must surely give pause to even the most jaded critic. The standard sceptical responses are growing a little thin and rather tiresome. On the other hand, the escala-

tion of the number of wild and unsubstantiated UFO stories in recent times has done nothing to help dispel the sceptical arguments. A confrontation with the facts, rather than fancies, of humanity's encounters with UFOs is in order.

It has been clear to me from the very beginning of my research that a true sceptical position is the best approach to this subject. By this I mean an approach taken in the true tradition of science, directed by the evidence and not by dogma from the zealots of both the UFO and the sceptical fraternities. Sceptical groups seem more intent on practising debunking than in true scepticism.

I have always been conscious that the majority of UFO reports involve genuine misinterpretations of a wide array of both prosaic and exotic phenomena. This book is a record of those Australian cases for which no 'normal' explanation has been found. These have been defined by astronomer Professor J. Allen Hynek, the leading scientific advocate for the phenomenon until his death in 1986. He wrote: 'We can define the UFO simply as the reported perception of an object or light seen in the sky or upon the land the appearance, trajectory, and general dynamic and luminescent behaviour of which do not suggest a logical, conventional explanation and which is not only mystifying to the original percipients but remains unidentified after close scrutiny of all available evidence by persons who are technically capable of making a common sense identification, if one is possible'.

The big question is whether such cases do represent something 'alien'. Many make an unsustainable leap and apply the 'extraterrestrial' label. I prefer the term 'UFO', with emphasis on 'U' for 'unidentified'. In writing this book I have tried to keep an open, albeit a critical, mind.

Every corner of Australia has been touched by the UFO mystery, some places more deeply than others. As this book will show, while UFOs do appear in cities, it is in the country that they are most common. Coonabarabran, Tyringham and Dundurrabin, Kempsey, St George, Boulia, Tully, Pine Creek, Corrogin, Mundrabilla, the Nullarbor, Leitchville-Echuca, Rosedale, the Mallee district, Bass Strait and Cressy. All these

places, and many others all over Australia, share a common link. They have played host to UFO activity for which there is no known explanation.

This book provides the first detailed history of UFO sightings in Australia. I am a scientist, and the approach I have taken in selecting material for the book is to include those cases which, after careful investigation wherever possible, have not been able to be explained by science. The strongest cases are usually the more recent, for it is only in the past few decades that UFO research groups have existed and been capable of conducting thorough investigations of reported sightings and abduction stories. For some of that period the Royal Australian Air Force was also involved in investigating UFOs, and parts of this book are based on the research I conducted when in 1982 I became the first outsider ever to see the RAAF's UFO files.

My own interest in the subject began thirty years ago when I was a young teenager. In June 1966 my home town of Grafton, New South Wales, became the focus of widely reported UFO activity. Many people, including local police, reported sightings. The same thing happened in 1969, when there was a rash of unusual 'ground effects' in the area, possibly left by UFOs, the most prominent being a large flattened crop site near Bungawalban. There was speculation that this was a 'flying saucer nest', and the affair gained national prominence because the property involved belonged to the local member of parliament. I went to Bungawalban and joined the curious throng. The four-and-a-half metre high crop of saccaline had been flattened in four distinct patches, the largest being about 18 metres by four-and-a-half. 'Lodging', a natural phenomenon that can affect crops in a similar manner, was ruled out by locals familiar with it. Two men working night shift had observed a glow in the sky in the direction of the patch, on the night of 16 April. A neighbouring farmer had also reportedly observed 'top-like objects' hovering in the area on a number of nights prior to the discovery of the impressions. While direct evidence linking UFOs with the flattened crop patches did not strike me at the time as overwhelming, I found the incident intriguing. It helped turn

me into an active researcher and investigator of UFO sightings.

The Bungawalban incident lacked one personal element for me—I was not there when the crop was affected. But later that year I was a witness of a UFO phenomenon.

MANNA MATTERS

In mid-afternoon on 30 August 1969 I was relaxing on a surfboard in the middle of the Clarence River near Grafton. I noticed streams of fine white filament coming down over the river. I was immediately fascinated as this was a great opportunity to directly sample what I took to be a natural phenomenon—the floating web of migratory balloon spiders. However, I also knew that in UFO lore, material of a similar appearance, known as 'angel hair', had occasionally been linked to UFOs, some researchers suggesting it might be a by-product of whatever strange processes power flying saucers.

I paddled over to the river bank where large amounts of this 'spider web' were coming down. I was not prepared for the improbable. Here in my hands was material that was clearly not migratory spider web. I began rolling up a copious amount of the material in my hands. The filaments diminished in size, which was not too unusual. But then the material dissipated into nothing visible, leaving no trace. It gave the impression of rapid sublimation from solid to gas, yet I detected no vapours or odour.

The properties of spider web are well known, and disappearing when touched is not one of them. Realising that I might be dealing with something exotic, I raced to a nearby residence to get some sample jars. The fall of filaments had been quite profuse and much of it had come down along the river bank. But when I returned to the river a few minutes later the filaments had disappeared. There was no apparent explanation involving the landscape or the weather to explain this. My experience became even more intriguing—was this the apocryphal 'angel's hair', the manna of the saucers!—when I found out that at the same time a number of people in Grafton, including my own parents, had seen a UFO, described by some as an 'elongated white mass',

travelling in a direction that would have passed over the river.

Perhaps there is some natural explanation for what I had seen and touched. Maybe the unidentified flying object was actually a compacted mass of some filaments that occur in nature? Possibly, but over the years I have never been able to find out a natural explanation for what I saw that day. It is possible that, for a few moments, I had actually held the evidence for UFOs there in my own hands.

FORBIDDEN SCIENCE

By then I had thoroughly immersed myself in the exotic world of UFOs. There was much that was rubbish and silly in the extreme, but amongst it all there was a compelling body of evidence for something that was genuinely unexplainable. I joined a Sydney organisation called the UFO Investigation Centre when I entered the University of New England to do a science degree. I was fortunate that northern New South Wales is a region—and others are found around Australia—which has more than its fair share of UFO sightings. I also joined an American organisation called the Aerial Phenomena Research Organisation. In working with all these people over the past three decades I have become part of what is known as the 'invisible college' of UFO researchers around the world. The members of the college are frequently scientists (I have an honours degree in chemistry) yet often we have to keep our interests a secret from our colleagues. The frustrating thing is not that many scientists should be sceptical about UFOs, but that they should ignore what is often compelling evidence.

Dr Jacques Vallee, a computer scientist and UFO researcher, defined 'the UFO problem' when he wrote, 'Witnesses of the strange occurrences numbered in the millions. But the study of their observations had been forcefully driven under-ground. It had turned into a fascinating discipline in a hypocritical modern world that claimed rational thought and open inquiry as its highest standard: it had become a Forbidden Science'. As a young scientist working with his mentor, J. Allen Hynek, Vallée real-

ised he was working on ‘one of the most profound and puzzling phenomena in the history of man’. The ‘invisible college’ that Hynek and Vallée organised was a secret scientific group in the spirit of the movement that preceded the formation of the English Royal Society in the early 1660s—a time when it could be dangerous to be interested in ‘natural philosophy’ or, as we call it today, science.

In 1973 I was a third-year science student majoring in chemistry and mathematics, also engaged in ‘forbidden science’. I was experiencing some difficulties in analysing soil samples from a possible UFO landing site at Emerald Beach, near Woolgoolga, on the north coast of New South Wales. Someone suggested I approach Dr Keith Bigg, then Deputy Director of Radiophysics at the Commonwealth Scientific Industrial Research Organisation. Dr Bigg was helpful in his advice. He was most intrigued about my descriptions of the Emerald Beach incident and the fact that ‘circles’ had been found. ‘Seems quite a classic case’, he wrote. But his parting advice had a twist to it. ‘Never admit that your interest is in UFOs or you’ll get nowhere. You’re more likely to get cooperation in hunting witches. Think up a “scientific” reason [for your interest in a particular phenomenon]’, he wrote. These closing remarks were—and are—a sad reflection on the prevailing, myopic, view of mainstream science. The English visionary, William Blake, referred to such narrowness of perception as ‘Newton’s sleep’.

The late Dr James McDonald, an atmospheric physicist of world repute, passionately believed that science had been shortsighted when it came to giving UFOs serious consideration. In a 1968 lecture McDonald said, ‘From time to time in the history of science, situations have arisen in which a problem of ultimately enormous importance went begging for adequate attention, simply because that problem appeared to involve phenomena so far outside the current bounds of scientific knowledge, that it was not even regarded as a legitimate subject of scientific concern. That is precisely the situation of the UFO problem now’.

In many places in this book I have used pseudonyms or initials for people who have seen UFOs or claim to have been abducted.

This is often at the request of these people, who believe they would be ridiculed, perhaps even persecuted, were their identity to become known. As some of the stories in the book will show, these fears are justified.

Throughout the book I have used metric measurements in the text but, for reasons of authenticity, have retained imperial measurements (yards and miles) where these are used in quoted witness statements and reports.

CHAPTER ONE

—the extraordinary abduction of Kelly Cahill—

I would like to begin with one of the most striking incidents of the Australian UFO story so far. This is the case of a woman, who is using the pseudonym Kelly Cahill to protect her privacy, who may have been abducted near Melbourne in 1993, and whose story is in important aspects corroborated by a group of completely independent witnesses. It has attracted great interest from around the world, due to the obvious integrity of the woman, the presence of independent witnesses, and the extraordinary nature of the events which took place.

Kelly is 27 years old and the mother of three children. She was married at the time of the incident, although her marriage broke up afterwards as a result of the trauma she suffered and the pressures this put on the relationship. She had her extraordinary experience early in the morning of 8 August 1993 while driving with her husband near the outer Melbourne housing estate of Narre Warren North, in the foothills of the Dandenong Mountains. Some of the following account is in Kelly's own words.

'My husband and I were driving to my girlfriend's place up in the mountains. It was her daughter's birthday. It was just after

dark and we were nearly there, about half an hour from her place. I'm just busy looking out the window. I look over towards this field as we are going past and I see a ring of orange lights. It was the first time I ever thought I had seen something that wasn't normal, you know what I mean. I was going to shut my mouth. I thought, "No, [my husband would just] have a go at me". But a couple of minutes up the road I said, "I swear I saw a UFO". He said, "Don't be stupid! It was probably a helicopter". I said, "It wasn't making any noise. It was just sitting on the ground". Anyway, after a few jibes at me, he forgot all about it, and we arrived.

'When we were there, we start talking about what I thought I had seen. My friend's father says, "You think you've seen little green men or something, Kelly?" and all this sort of stuff. It was turned into a joke, and I just totally forgot about it. We went out and played bingo, then we came back. We got back from bingo at about 11 p.m. and we didn't stay for very long after that.

'Anyway, we were driving back down the same stretch of road [Belgrave Hallam Road, just outside Belgrave South] when we saw something sitting there, hovering above the road in front of us. I couldn't tell what it was. We were far away, but as we got closer it was . . . well, it wasn't like the orange light in the field. It was a round shape with some sort of glass around, or what looked like windows and lights around the bottom. It was dark, so you couldn't really tell at first. But as we got closer and closer, there was no noise or anything.

'Even my husband was saying, "You're right! That's something, that's very, very strange". And I swear we saw people in there, and then just as I said to him, "I swear there's people in there", it shot off to the left as fast as it could go. I mean it just disappeared. Within a split second, it had gone.

'We kept driving and about a kilometre ahead, all of a sudden, there was a really, really bright light in front of us, and I've got my hand up, up above my brow to look out the window, because it's that bright, but I can't see anything.

'I said to my husband, "What are you going to do?" He said, "I'm going to keep driving'".

I knew I was going to see a UFO, I just knew, because of what

we had seen, I'd seen it twice already in one night and he had seen it once . . . and the adrenalin was pumping, the heart was thumping, I was so excited'.

All of a sudden, what seemed like only a moment later, Kelly was calm, as if nothing had happened. 'Weren't we going to see a UFO?' she asked her husband.

'I don't know. We must have gone around a corner or something', he replied.

Kelly thought she might have blacked out, but her husband disagreed. They argued about what had happened for part of the way home, where they arrived at about 2.30 a.m. Kelly, who felt greatly disturbed, although she did not know why, was certain they had left their friend's place before midnight (her friend later agreed with this) and that the journey had therefore taken about an hour more than it should have. Her husband insisted they had left later, more likely around 1 a.m. The disagreement was complicated by the fact that neither of them wore a watch.

On the way home, Kelly could smell vomit, although she could not see where it was. She also had stomach pains. 'When I got home that night I found a triangular mark below my navel, with what looked like a little laparoscopy cut, and I also started bleeding that night. Three and a half weeks later I ended up in hospital with an infection in the womb. I hadn't stopped bleeding. I know I wasn't pregnant, as the doctor suggested. He said that the only way you can get that kind of infection in the womb is if you've been pregnant or it's been caused by an operation. They put me on a drip and fixed me up. I felt pretty crook'.

RECOLLECTIONS

Kelly's memories of that night's events came back to her gradually, and I am presenting them in this way so the reader can gain some idea of the trauma she went through as she struggled over the next few months to recall what had happened to her. One problem was that her husband refused to discuss the night's events, even though he agreed that they had seen a UFO. Kelly began to wonder if anything had really happened to her. Then,

two months later, they was driving along the same road on the way home from her friend's place again and, as they came to the place where she thought she had seen the UFO, she was overcome by fear. The memories of that night came flooding back.

She remembered that on the earlier occasion they had come around a bend and seen an enormous craft about 150 metres from the road, on the ground in a field. They had pulled over and got out of their car, and noticed that another car had also pulled up, about 100 metres away. 'The craft took up nearly our whole field of vision', said Kelly. 'It had a row of orange lights and what seemed to be either rays of blue light or blue gas arranged in a half-moon shape beneath it'.

They went into the field and saw a black being, over two metres high, with glowing red eyes, coming towards them. Then other beings approached rapidly and smoothly across the grass, as if gliding. One lot came over to Kelly and her husband, and the other to the people who had got out of the other car further down the road. 'Its shape was all wrong'. Kelly tried to use thought as a means to communicate. She was immediately overwhelmed with fear. 'It sounds stupid but it had great big, round, red eyes, like huge flies' eyes and they were burning, like . . . fluorescent stop lights, I suppose, that sort of real burning red. All of a sudden I started screaming, "They've got no souls", and then I screamed louder, "They've got no souls!"

'The next thing I know I felt this Umph! in my stomach, I was winded, and I was thrown right back and I was on my back on the ground. I sat up, with my head between my knees. I was trying to stay conscious. I couldn't see. It was all black. I'm screaming out to my husband, "I can't see anything". The next thing I heard was my husband saying, "Let go of me". His voice was all sort of cracked up with fear, and I'd never heard that from my husband. He's not frightened of anything usually . . .

'Then this male voice said, "We don't mean you any harm". My husband replied, "Why did you hit Kelly then?" That's the last I heard of my husband's voice. I heard the strange male voice, then I heard myself saying, "Oh, God, I'm going to be sick". I had my head between my knees, and I felt violently nauseous.

Then I must have blacked out for a little while. I don't remember being sick. Then I remember hearing talk about "being a peaceful people", and I started screaming out, I said, "Don't believe them, they're going to steal your souls". I know it sounds ridiculous now, but at the time I was hysterically terrified. I was really, really terrified. I had never felt terror like that, not even in my worst nightmares.

'Oh, there's one more thing I remember that he said. "I wouldn't harm her. She's my daughter". I took it as sarcasm straight away. It sounded like sarcasm. There was even a small laugh after that. I don't know, it didn't seem good to me. At this point, I started screaming, and going on about demons trying to steal people's souls. I know it sounds stupid, but I did . . . Next thing I hear him saying, "Would somebody do something about her". And I felt a hand touch my shoulder. It wasn't hard, it was quite gentle. That's when I absolutely cracked. I'm still sitting on the ground and I couldn't see a thing, but I made sure that my eyes were just fierce. Something snapped in me. Before that I was crying. But then something snapped in me and I got so angry . . . Anyway, I started screaming out stupid things, told them to go back where they came from'.

Her next memory is of being back in the car.

THE DREAMS

Kelly subsequently had a number of extraordinary dreams connected with the events of 8 August. In one dream she is standing in a small room, with an alien and a small table in front of her. In another dream she saw a strange being present in her room, its eyes obscured by a cloak. 'These dreams seemed very physical. The sensation is I know I'm dreaming and I've got to wake up. In this particular one, I felt as if my legs were being pulled off the bed, and I was paralysed from my waist down, and my legs were being pulled over to the side, yet I could use the top of my body. Then I'm grabbing a pillow, trying to hit my husband, to wake him up, because he was beside me that night. I'm fighting this. I'm not going to let this thing drag me off the bed by my

legs. Then I woke up and saw it standing there again! This time the hood covered the eyes, and it didn't scare me. I was still terrified, but it didn't scare me quite as much, because each time it scared me, it was that same power like I felt out in the field that night'.

In the next dream, upon waking from a strange 'dream', she saw the same creature as before, however it was naked, and leaning over her looking as if it was about to kiss her navel area. It was tall, with a head much larger in proportion to its body than a human's head would be, very long and thin arms, with an abdomen disproportionate to its thin frame, like a child suffering from malnutrition. Its skin was like grey-black plasticine.

Kelly woke up with a scream.

The final dream occurred in January 1994. In the dream the bathroom light had blown. Once again there was a sense of presence. Something was persistently trying to grab Kelly's right hand. Eventually she let her hand be taken. She immediately woke up. Once again the creature in the black robe was standing at her bedside. It went away. It turned out that the light had indeed blown and the diamond and sapphire rings she wore on her right hand had gone. To date they have not been found.

THE OTHER WITNESSES

If the 8 August 1993 encounter revolved only around Kelly it could be argued that the experience could be explained as some sort of psychological episode. However, the presence of another, completely independent group of witnesses, suggests otherwise. The other group comprised a married couple and a woman friend, and once again it was the women who seem to have played the dominant part. Bill, the male witness in the trio, like Kelly's husband, appears to have had only limited involvement, or at least limited recollection. The two woman have a conscious recollection up to and including onboard episodes. They recollect the UFO, and the tall black beings. Sketches made independently by these women and Kelly, of both the UFO and the beings, bear striking resemblances.

For the trio the experience seems to have started as they approached the site while still driving. All three could hear a strange noise and started to feel ill. Bill felt as if he was going to faint. He started to lose control of the car, and ran off the road, striking a pole. After checking for damage they drove off and within minutes were passed by a speeding car with its lights on high beam. Then another car passed them. Soon the two women saw the UFO and Bill stopped the car, although now he does not remember seeing the UFO. The two woman recollect the UFO clearly, and their descriptions match those of Kelly Cahill. (The incident has been closely investigated by John Auchettl of Phenomena Research Australia).

Bill seems to have been isolated from the central experience which followed. He has extensive memories of smells and sounds, and remembers a lot of activity was going on, but does not recall seeing anything. He subsequently underwent hypnosis, which expanded his recollections to things that happened on board the craft, but once again these were through the senses of smell and hearing only.

The two women remember going on board the craft. There was no sense of this being a abduction, as they feel they went of their own free will. There was some sort of physical examination, although details are vague. There was no speech from the aliens. Neither of the two women saw each other, or any other humans, while in the alien environment. They were, however, vaguely aware of what was happening to each other, by some means like psychic communication. After the incident the two women had marks that resembled pressure rings around the base of their legs, and these lasted for about two weeks. Each had a rash on her thighs and one had swelling of the vaginal area. Nothing more can be said about the experiences of this party at the moment as their story seems to have been sold to an overseas media group.

Certain physical traces (including a magnetic anomaly) detected at the site suggest something unusual did happen there. Kelly Cahill, who has been generous in her willingness to co-operate with Australian UFO researchers, continues to be affected by

the strange night back in August 1993. Tension mounted between her husband and herself, with her husband refusing to talk about what had happened to them that night. The couple have now separated. The extraordinary nature of her experience, including the fact that it has been corroborated by independent witnesses, makes this one of the most compelling UFO encounters on record from anywhere in the world.

CHAPTER TWO

—the Aboriginal experience—

We now begin the historical part of this book. UFOs have been widely popularised as a purely contemporary manifestation, confined largely to the second half of the twentieth century. Research has shown that this might not be the case, and that UFOs have been reported throughout recorded history. Each era attempts to describe flying objects using the language it is familiar with for strange experiences, and often this has been religious in nature. There are incidents in many great religious accounts, including the Bible, which could be interpreted as involving UFOs. In Australia some of the legends and lore of the Aborigines certainly suggest this. Of course such speculation is entirely hypothetical, particularly where, as with Aboriginal mythology, we are dealing with stories which have been passed down verbally for hundreds of years or more. Nevertheless, there are numerous parts of Aboriginal lore in which parallels can be seen with modern UFO experiences. Aboriginal myths incorporate the idea of 'sky-beings', with the Wandjina being among the most interesting to consider. The Wandjina have been preserved in a fascinating oral tradition and in a large collection of rock paintings scattered throughout the Kimberley region of Australia. The paintings have received all manner of interpretations, from styl-

ised representations of a pervasive myth system to naive 'ancient astronaut' theories.

ANCIENT TRACES?

The aboriginal tribe, the Bad, of the west Kimberly area, revered a supreme being called Djamar. According to tradition he manifested himself in a manner highly suggestive of something landing and leaving behind a physical record. (Of course the reverse can argued, that the Aborigines invested supernatural dimensions into many prosaic features of the natural landscape). The young initiates of the tribe were led to the stony bed of a creek and were shown the holes where Djamar had planted his bullroarer. In Aboriginal lore the sound of the bullroarer—a roaring wind noise—symbolised the approach of the god. The original accounts indicate that Djamar's bullroar or 'galuguru' are representations of the supreme being itself. According to anthropologist E.A. Worms: 'Earnestly the old men impress on the youths the terrible force of the original tjurunga, by pointing out the baldness of the surrounding hills and the damaged bark of the trees struck by Djamar when he whirled the bullroarer. It smashed the rocks of the foreshore'. After the manifestation of Djamar, which left behind all this damage, the supreme being himself ascended once again into the sky with his 'tjurunga'.

According to Bundjalung tribal tradition, Salty Lagoon, north of the Broadwater National Park, near Evans Head on the New South Wales north coast, was home to a female ancestral being called Gaungan. Described as 'tall and slim, with long flowing hair, beautiful hands and long fingernails', when she moved between Salty Lagoon and Wardell, Gaungan often appeared as a shining light. The legends indicate she would try to seduce men into the sea or the lagoon. Tradition has it that Gaungan flew from Woodenbong, landed on a beach near Salty Lagoon and turned into a black rock.

MEN OF HIGH DEGREE

In different tribes in the past, Aboriginal shamans, 'clever men' or 'men of high degree', described 'celestial ascents' to meet with the 'sky gods' such as Baiame, Biral, Goin and Bundjil. Also, many of the accounts of ritualistic initiation involving these men bear striking parallels to modern UFO contact and abduction stories. The 'chosen one' is set upon by 'spirits', ritualistically 'killed', and then experiences a wondrous journey, generally an aerial ascent to a strange realm, to met the 'sky god'. He is restored to life, a new life as the tribal shaman.

Ritual death and resurrection, abduction by powerful beings, ritual removal or rearrangement of body parts, symbolic disembowelment, implanting of artefacts in the body, aerial ascents and journeys into strange realms, alien tutelage and enlightenment, personal empowerment and transformation: these and many other phenomena are recurring elements of the extraordinary shamanic tradition.

Anthropologist Adolphus Elkin pointed out one particularly evocative example of shamanic lore: 'Amongst the powers of the Mara medicine-men is that of climbing at night by means of a rope invisible to ordinary mortals up to the sky, where he can hold converse with the star people'.

A.W. Howitt in his *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* recounts the initiation of a Wiradjuri medicine man: 'We will go up to Baiame's camp. He got astride of a Muir thread and put me on another, and we held by each other's arms. At the end of the thread was Wombu, the bird of Baiame. We went through the clouds, and on the other side was the sky. We went through the place where the Doctors go through, and it kept opening and shutting very quickly. My father said that, if it touched a Doctor when he was going through, it would hurt his spirit and when he returned home he would sicken and die. On the other side we saw Baiame sitting in his camp'.

Because of the many similarities between elements of shamanic initiation experiences, modern UFO abduction and contact stories, and even 'near death' experiences, people who experience similar events today could be seen as potential 'cos-

mic shamans'. But because modern society has not recognised the utility of the shamanic experience in interpreting these 'alien visions', those who see them are seldom able to recognise, and place their own experiences within, the lengthy tradition of such experiences. It should be said, however, that many UFO abduction researchers do not accept this interpretation, and instead contend that we are dealing with bona fide extraterrestrial abductors.

Needless to say, many people completely reject any arguments for the reality of these experiences. Whatever the eventual explanation, it is impossible to ignore the parallels between traditional shaman initiation experiences and contemporary UFO abduction and contact reports.

A UFO ABDUCTION IN 1933

Australian mysteries researcher Rex Gilroy records an intriguing tale that involved an Aboriginal woman in a UFO abduction in 1933 at the isolated locality of Discovery Well, on the northern edge of the Great Sandy Desert, in Western Australia. This is one of the countless tales Gilroy has collected over the years. The author would like to hear from anyone who could provide more information. (See Appendix B for contact details). The story echoes the tribal legends and traditions of men and women being abducted by 'sky gods' or 'culture heroes' in the Dreamtime, and the initiation experiences of Aboriginal shamans. In Gilroy's account, the Aboriginal woman claimed her tribe had been frightened off from Discovery Well when a 'large shiny egg' suddenly came down out of the sky. In broad daylight the strange object flew low over them. Several beings, described as strange, grey-skinned and man-like, came out of the 'egg'. The woman said she was stunned by an object carried by one of the beings and then carried aboard. Inside the 'egg' the interior was glowing. She was strapped to a shining table and apparently 'experimented with'.

This 1933 tale, if true, anticipates the spate of UFO abduction stories that would virtually dominate the UFO landscape in the

1990s. It was not until 1957 that the first famous sexual abduction experience of Antonio Villas Boas from Brazil occurred. The famous Betty and Barney Hill abduction story in the United States did not take place until 1961. Neither story was well known until the mid 1960s.

POWERFUL BEINGS AND MOON MEN

I have already shown that abduction by powerful 'spirits' is a strong and enduring motif in Aboriginal myths and legends. So too is the theme of sexual harassment and molestation by these powerful beings from above. The Ngatadjara tribe of the Warburton ranges, in Western Australia, had a myth which described how a group of women, the Kunkarunkara, were protected from the unwelcome attentions of the moon-man, Kula. Another variation indicates that they were being continuously pursued, and occasionally raped, by Jula, a man of the constellation of Orion. The women, legend has it, finally escaped into the sky and became the star formation known in the West as the Pleiades.

An Australian anthropologist has published her conclusion that Aboriginal people have probably been visited by extraterrestrials. This is based on both traditional stories and contemporary ones.

John Kernott, who does a mail run in the Kimberley, has heard a lot of strange stories from Aboriginal people. He told me tales of sexual contact of an abduction kind that were apparently very common amongst Aboriginal women in the Great Sandy Desert and the Central Desert. Since about 1986, Central Desert Aboriginal women have told him of 'feather foot' spirits. These do not walk on the ground, they walk in the air. They can move through walls and other objects, and they can come and punish people. The Aboriginal women have told Kernott about spirits having sex with them, about having babies when no baby ever comes. Often their stomachs swelled up, then went down. Their sexual assailants were often described as being like 'men in black'. It was often hard to see their eyes. 'Phantom' or 'false' pregnancies and missing foetuses, involving indigenous people, feature in UFO abduction lore around the world. The concept of

'spirit children' is also widespread. While such accounts are fascinating, they are difficult for white researchers to interpret, given the cultural filtering and distortion that is likely.

In about 1989 John's father-in-law, an Aboriginal man, told him that when he was a young man in the 1930s, camping with his tribe before the white man took them off their land, they saw a green light spinning around in the sky. It landed behind trees. Lots of little men shining with green light came. They walked around the tribe, looking at them, and then walked back to the UFO, which took off.

CHAPTER THREE

—1788 to 1945—

With the advent of white colonisation, documented accounts of UFO sightings began to appear. Most of the early accounts could probably be explained if more information was available. A number, however, seem to defy easy explanation. In *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, Lieutenant Colonel Collins recorded in 1793: 'An extraordinary appearance in the sky was observed by several people between five and six o'clock in the evening of Friday 12th of the month. It appeared as if a ray of forked lightning had been stationary in that quarter of the sky for about fifteen minutes, which was the time it was visible. It was not to be discerned, however, after the sun had quitted the horizon'.

This observation is difficult to resolve, due to a paucity of information, but may have been some sort of aberration related to the sun. The following story is far more intriguing. In 1975 a 15-page document came to my notice. The title announced that it was a 'Copy from the Memorandum Book of Fred Wm. Birmingham, the Engineer to the Council of Parramatta. A machine to go through the air. AD 1873'. A few preliminary words about the origins of the document are necessary.

A UFO researcher named T.V. Homan was given the docu-

ment by a Mrs N. de Launte. According to Homan, de Launte obtained the original book from Wallace Haywood, a teacher, who lived in the Park, Parramatta. How Mr Haywood obtained the book is unclear, but it was in his family for quite a long time. Haywood's home was situated within a few hundred yards of the highest part of the Parramatta Park, which, as we will see, was the landing site of the 'ark' in Birmingham's vision.

I have interviewed members of the de Launte family, who seem to have no interest in UFOs. They remember that the original memorandum book did contain accounts of aerial objects and was in their family at least as far back as the early 1940s. This is important because UFOs did not enter the popular consciousness until, at the very earliest, 1947. I have also been able to establish that a man called Frederick William Birmingham, an engineer and surveyor, did live in Duck's Lane, Parramatta, between 1868 and 1873, as alleged in the memorandum book. The house still exists, and I have visited it.

I cannot find any anachronisms in the manuscript's text. From all this, I have concluded that the account is almost certainly genuine. Exactly what one is to make of it you can decide for yourself.

THE ACCOUNT

'On the night of the 25 July 1868, I had a wonderful dream, a vision . . '. Birmingham described standing under the verandah of his rented cottage when he saw, up in the sky, the passage of a bizarre procession. This consisted of 'the Lord Bishop of Sydney's head in the air looking intently upon me in a frowning half laughing mood . . . I watched it intently and when it had travelled to the east it dimmed—just as one loses his focus by quickly drawing in or out the slide of a telescope. In the same manner, the head appeared two more times'.

Birmingham dropped his gaze to ponder the extraordinary display. 'After some considerable time I determined to look at the head or heads again' but they were gone.

'I retraced the course the head had taken and just in the spot

where I first saw the head I saw an "Ark" and while looking at it, I said to myself aloud, "Well that is a beautiful vessel". I had no sooner ended the sentence than I was made aware that I was not alone, for to my right hand and a little to the rear of my frontage a distinct voice said, slowly, "That's a machine to go through the air".

Tn a little time I replied, "It appears to me more like a vessel for going upon the water, but, at all events, it's the loveliest thing I ever saw".

'I then felt that somehow or another the spirit and I were as it may have been spiritually on the highest part of the Parramatta Park'.

By this time, the 'machine' had moved through the air in a zig-zag fashion, 'then stopped, and descended some twenty feet or so as gently as a feather on the grass', at a distance of about 20 yards from Birmingham. He described the ark in the following way: '. . . a brown colour . . . its peculiar shapings are well impressioned upon my mind and the colour seemed to blend with faint, flitting shades of steel blue, below and appearing tremulous and like what one might term magnified scales on a large fish, the latter flying in the air'. The 'spirit', which followed the ark, was described as being Tike a neutral tint shade and the shape of a man in his usual frock dress'.

It said to him, 'Do you wish to enter upon it?' Birmingham replied, 'Yes'.

'"Then come", said the spirit, thereupon we were lifted off the grass and gently carried through the air and onto the upper part of the machine . . '.

The spirit beckoned the surveyor to enter the 'pilot house', as Birmingham termed a part of the machine, saying, 'Step in'. Birmingham described how he went down about three steep steps. The pilot house was lower than the deck of the machine. The only feature of the room was a table, covered with material like oilskin. About two feet separated the table and the walls of the room. Birmingham referred to how 'everything appeared very strong, the sides I noticed were extremely thick, about six inches—and I wondered why they were so strong in "a machine to go through the air"'.

Standing alone at the rear end of the table, on which he rested one hand, Birmingham began to repent agreeing to come inside the object. 'I felt miserably queer—just like one who undertaking a billet or post he knows nothing of. The hand of the spirit was resting on the table and it held several printed papers. The first paper was covered with figures and formulae. Thinking the formulae and figures might be too intricate for my comprehension I said to the spirit, "Oh! Will I want them?" The spirit replied slowly, but with marked emphasis, "It is absolutely necessary that you should know these things, but, you can study them as you go on"'.

'I again cast down my eyes between my hands as it were on the table and considering silently the words of the holy spirit and when I looked about I found I was alone in the ark!

'So I fell, I suppose, into my usual sleeping state, and waking next morning deeply impressed with that vision of the night.

'There may be a meaning in all this'.

In 1873 Birmingham had another sighting one night at sunset. Three small 'clouds' appeared and from one of them extended two screw-like appendages. Between these 'screws' appeared a shape 'like two flat necks on a turtle-shaped body'. This assembly disappeared, reappeared, and then 'to my surprise the two big . . . screws folded up like the arms of a bear and lost their shape in the middle cloud'.

Here the account finishes. The memorandum book indicates that Birmingham had become obsessed with learning the secret of the 'ark'. He died, apparently without finding out the secret, in 1893.

Birmingham's vision of the ark has much in common with the rich harvest of stories of the 1950s from 'contactees', people who claimed to have met aliens, and also more recent abduction experiences. Some of these common elements include the invitation, levitation, tours of the machine, alien tutelage, extra-sensory perception, disorientation, and bizarre follow-up experiences. The less familiar aspects of the Birmingham vision (the dream-like quality of the account, floating heads, spirits,

flying, instantaneous relocation, poltergeists, voices and visions) do not, to my mind, lessen its possible connection with modern UFO accounts. These might just be different ways of trying to describe a similar experience.

THE GOULBURN GHOST LIGHT

The *Goulburn Herald* recorded the following interesting phenomenon during March, 1878: 'Lately there has been much excitement amongst the superstitious, numbers of whom go off in parties, with guns, to the range above Stewart's Garden, where there is an unfinished stone house. Here an apparition is said to make its appearance in the form of a light, and to travel, sometimes very slowly, and frequently very quickly, from the river bank just below, up to, and around the house, then varying the performance by a run among the trees. This is said to be kept up from an early hour in the evening until about three in the morning; all endeavours to get near the light are said to prove futile'.

Ransome T. Wyatt's book *The History of Goulburn* records that one 'Grunsell claimed to have disposed of it with a shot gun'.

A 'REMARKABLE METEOR'

In 1879 Mr S. Worsley Clifton, Collector of Customs, at Fremantle, Western Australia, forwarded the following account of a 'remarkable meteor' to R.J. Elleig of the Melbourne observatory. Elleig in turn passed it on to the science journal *Nature,* which published the following account of the apparition: 'A small black cloud on a clear day appeared in the east, travelling not very swiftly towards the north-west. It burst into a ball of fire with an apparent disc the size of the full moon, blood-red in colour. It left a train of black or dark-coloured vapour across the heavens which was visible for three-quarters of a hour. No sound was heard, sky perfectly clear, and the thermometer, 100 degrees Fahrenheit, in the shade'.

GHOST LIGHTS AND A STRANGE ENCOUNTER

During the 1890s so-called 'ghostlights' were frequently observed moving along the roads and about the countryside in South Australia. Farmers at Orrorro and Cornish miners at Moonta often mistook these small, detached lights for bicycle lamps at a distance. But once they were observed at closer range, only a white light source could be discernible. Sometimes, two lights could be seen together. Many attempts were made to catch the elusive lights as they moved about at fence level. After a few years the reports of the elusive lights died out.

An anecdote handed down within a farming family told of an extraordinary UFO story that was alleged to have happened in 1893 in central New South Wales. A farmer claimed that a saucer-shaped aerial object landed in a paddock on his property. As he approached the object, a man in strange clothing emerged from it. The farmer walked towards the being. The stranger shone some kind of beam at him, whereby the farmer was thrown to the ground, stunned. His hand where the beam had hit him was paralysed for life. This story was told to Dr Miran Lindtner, president of the UFO Information Centre, during the 1960s.

AN EARLY ASTRONOMER'S SIGHTING

On 20 November 1902 a remarkable phenomenon was seen by Mr Griffiths, the assistant astronomer, and others, at the Adelaide observatory in South Australia. Two officers were taking weather observations when they noticed a brilliant 'globular' light, which was brightly visible for four minutes. The object appeared like Venus does when it is at its greatest brilliance soon after sunset. When it was near to the prime vertical position it became elongated and took an elliptical form, the long axis lying south to north. During November 1902 eastern Australia hosted an incredible array of 'fireball' reports. Much of it may have been related to dust storm 'devils' or related natural electrical phenomena.

THE WAVE OF 1909

One of the most interesting periods in the antipodean UFO history was the 'airship' wave that swept Australia and New Zealand during 1909. It began in July in New Zealand, with numerous sightings of unusual nocturnal lights and 'airships' seen both during the day and at night. The sightings initially appeared to be most intense over the southern end of the South Island of New Zealand. In the following weeks the reports appeared to move northwards, and eventually by August, Australia also fell under the grip of 'aerialitis'. Like many more recent UFO waves, there were some genuinely puzzling cases set against a background of misinterpretations, sensationalism and, to a lesser extent, outright fraud. One of the earliest reports occurred at about noon on 23 July, when a woman and several schoolchildren at Kelso claimed to have observed an airship. Initially it was reported that a man was observed sitting in the craft. This was not confirmed in later retelling. The media accounts of the day carried sketches of the 'Kelso airship', attributed to some of the school children involved. It should be noted that the local children had been exposed to fictional airship stories in the children's magazine *Chums,* in a story called 'The Peril of the Motherland'. The newspaper the *Evening Star* of 30 July gave the following account of the Kelso visitation.

'Mrs Russell, evidently the only adult who saw the phenomena, said she was going down towards the station about 12 o'clock when she saw a streak of blackness shoot over the hill and apparently come straight towards her. Then it suddenly turned and swerved away over some trees out of her sight. She was very frightened when she saw it. In appearance it was just like a boat. It was black in colour. She saw it for just a few minutes. It was travelling very fast at first, but when it turned, it came lower and went somewhat slower. She was very flustered as she thought the end of the world had come'.

Years later some of the children reported that the story was a hoax that had got out of hand. It is difficult to assess these appar-

ent recantations, since in part they looked like attempts to deflect persistent media interest, and yet other statements do suggest fabrication or embellishments by the journalist who originally wrote the story.

Two men working on a dredge on a river in the Waikaka Valley, a few miles north of Gore, in New Zealand, got an excellent view of what was dubbed 'the nocturnal mystery of the air'. At dawn on 30 July 1909 the men saw it descend out of the mist. The object had a light at both ends. Two figures could be plainly observed inside. The dredge winchman, Mr F. Green, said the object rose and fell like a bird. It appeared to be a narrow, boat-shaped aerial craft, which circled the dredge several times quite closely over a period of several minutes. The 'airship' made 'curious and seemingly impossible manoeuvres', apparently travelling at speed, then suddenly decelerating. Eventually it disappeared into the mist, in the direction of Otakarama, leaving behind a curious yellow glare.

The *Hawkes Bay Herald* of 6 August 1909 carried the following account of an observation of 'airship operators' on 3 August.

'A circumstantial story is being early discussed in Waipawa of the seeing of an airship by a man on Tuesday night. He was riding near the racecourse and his horse became restive. He discovered the cause was a large torpedo-shaped structure passing over his head. The airship, he states, was painted grey and three persons were visible, one of whom shouted out to him in an unknown tongue. The ship rose to a great height, showing lights at prow and stern, and, after circling around, disappeared behind a hill. On the same night another resident saw a ship-like structure high in the air, which emitted a loud humming sound The ship was so high that it appeared only a yard or so long. A faint light came from the ship. Another resident asked her husband about the same hour that night, "What is that humming noise?"'

The first Australian reports of 1909 apparently came from Goulburn, New South Wales, on 5 August when three or four

residents of North Goulburn reported seeing a bright, moving, blue light in the sky. The *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Daily Telegraph* of 10 and 11 August respectively reported the visitation. The reports at Goulburn continued for the next five nights. The mystery light was described as big as 'a motor car lamp'. On 7 August four young men at the brick kilns near the North Goulburn railway station saw the light. 'It was pale blue in colour. The brightness of the light attracted the youth's attention. Only the light was seen, there being nothing to show the presence of a supporting body'. On 8 August 'the light made its appearance from the south travelling once again towards Governor's Hill, inclining towards the east and returning back to the south'.

Reports of the 'nocturnal mystery of the air' began to flood in from all over Australia. The Australian wave was never as compelling as the 'airship' one that immediately proceeded it in New Zealand. At the time the conjunction of Jupiter and Venus, particularly prominent in the night sky, generated many reports.

One of the more substantial Australian reports occurred on 13 August at Glen Innes, New South Wales when 'several responsible residents described an object like a balloon moving in a northerly direction. A night glass was obtained and the object was found to be shaped like an inverted top. The lower portion was lighted, and as the body revolved a light like a small flashlight kept turning on the land beneath. The upper portion was in darkness and the object continued drifting in a northerly direction'.

More reports occurred in New Zealand in early September of the same year. Late in the afternoon, two well-known Gore residents observed a cigar-shaped object with a 'car' attached, drifting over the Tapanui Hills. It gradually disappeared over the horizon towards Kelso. A few days later, the 'airship' apparently appeared for the last time. The Gore correspondent of the *Southland Times* reported that: 'For half an hour it appeared in view, coming over the hills on the eastern side of the town Otaraia. It apparently sailed backwards and forwards at a great pace and, turning around, gradually disappeared over the same hills,

although it was subsequently seen in the direction of the Gore race course. The children of a prominent resident also saw it, and stated that it was cigar-shaped . . . Reliable testimony to the sight is also borne by a party of golfers who were on their way home from the golf links when they saw it'.

Another 'mystery airship' was observed at Minderoo Station, near Onslow, Western Australia, on 25 October 1909. Mrs. A.J. Roe, wife of the station manager, was the first to spot the object. She stated, 'It looked compact, like a dirigible balloon, but appeared to be squarer and more like an aeroplane. The sun shone on it, and flashes came from it, as though reflected from something revolving, or from metal work'. Three station hands also saw the UFO.

THE DEAD PIGS

Fernvale, a small village in New South Wales, played host to a procession of unusual phenomena during a few weeks in 1927. I investigated the story in 1985 and 1986, interviewing the main reporting witness, who was a ten year old boy at the time of the events, and his younger sister, who was also present. The affair began with the arrival of a dancing light in the sky. Over several nights it returned for repeat performances. The cattle were disturbed by the aerial apparition. One cow went berserk and had to be put down. The light returned on the following night, and once again the cows were very disturbed. On the third night the light apparently did not appear, but the cow herd was terribly disturbed once again. In the morning three cows were found dead, all looking as if they had been 'scared to death'. Neighbours had similar experiences. One was terrified by an 'apparition' while walking home. The reporting witness was soon to see the nature of this apparition.

Three pigs kept in a special fattening sty were attacked by a mystery intruder. Two of them were found dead, with puncture marks on their necks and scratches and puncture marks over their bodies. The other pig was missing. There was no evidence of it

having broken out, and the railings of the sty were too high for it to jump out. An unsuccessful search ended with the discovery of a huge patch of blood with tell-tale pig's hair present, about 150 metres from the cow yards. The cows were in a frenzy. No further evidence of the missing pig was ever found.

One night during this period, the 10 year old boy was awoken by strange night noises, unlike any he had heard before. He told his parents but by then the noises had stopped, and it was put down to his imagination. The noises returned on the next night, this time much louder. The boy's parents also heard the noise, and were unnerved by it. The windows and doors were closed. In the morning, footprints like those of a 'Wellington boot tread' were found leading from the front door through to the back. Both doors were open.

The nocturnal light visitations continued for a while, until the novelty wore off and the family stopped looking out for them. However, one night the boy and his older brother were returning from a night of cards with neighbours when they witnessed a brightly lit, flying object travel through the valley, light up the whole area, turn slightly to follow the valley contours, and finally come to rest on a hill. The object glowed for some time on the ground. Eventually there was darkness. The boys investigated in the morning, confirming the presence of a complete circle of scorched grass, about nine metres in diameter, where the object had been seen to land. The site appeared as a brown area amongst the green grass. The neighbours at whose house the boys had played cards had also seen the light landing. They too visited the site to see what had been there.

Other puzzling events were described. The boy and other members of his family saw large, unfamiliar birds in the neighbourhood. One night the family had gone to a social event at their neighbour's. The oldest son had remained behind at the house. A strange man dressed in clothes resembling a white suit arrived at the neighbour's house. Everyone thought he was with one of the other visitors. He said nothing and only stayed for a short time. Back at the house, the oldest son was in darkness. He heard a noise in the house, and sang out, 'Who is there!' The boy got out of bed in time to see someone in a white suit disappear-

ing into the darkness. The ground between the two neighbour's houses was tricky, even more so on a pitch-black night. There were two large creeks, which had to be crossed at certain points by planks, and a big stream which was navigated by picking one's way carefully over a fallen tree truck—no easy matter for a stranger at night. The stranger was never seen or heard of again.

FRANCIS CHICHESTER OVER THE TASMAN SEA

While making the first solo plane flight across the Tasman Sea between New Zealand and Australia on 10 June 1931, the famous adventurer Francis Chichester encountered 'a dull grey-white airship' of ghost-like manner. Chichester, who was a remarkable man, described his encounter with an inexplicable aerial phenomenon in his excellent book, *The Lonely Sea and the Sky*. At three o'clock Chichester decided to fly north-west, to avoid facing a storm that lay in his path: 'Round the storm we flew into calm air under a weak lazy sun. I took out the sextant and got two shoots. It took me thirty minutes to work them out, for the engine kept back-firing, and my attention wandered every time it did . . .

'Suddenly, ahead and to the left, there were bright flashes in several places, like the dazzle of a heliograph. I saw a dull grey-white airship coming towards me. It seemed impossible, but I could have sworn that it was an airship, nosing towards me like an oblong pearl. Except for a cloud or two, there was nothing else in the sky. I looked around, sometimes catching a flash or a glint, and, turning again to look at the airship, I found it had disappeared. I screwed up my eyes, unable to believe what I was seeing, and twisted the seaplane this way and that, thinking that the airship must be hidden by a blind spot. Dazzling flashes continued in four or five different places, but I could not pick out any planes. Then, out of some clouds, I saw another, or the same, airship advancing. I watched it intently, determined not to look away for a fraction of a second, I'd see what happened to this one, if I had to chase it. It drew steadily closer, until perhaps a mile away, when suddenly it vanished. Then it reappeared, close

to where it had vanished. I watched with angry intentness. It drew closer, and I could see the dull gleam of light on its nose and back. It came on, but instead of increasing in size, it diminished as it approached. When quite near, it suddenly became its own ghost—one second I could see through it, and the next it had vanished. I decided that it could only be a diminutive cloud, perfectly shaped like an airship and then dissolving, but it was uncanny that it should exactly resume the same shape after it once vanished. I turned towards the flashes, but those too had vanished. All this was many years before anyone spoke of flying saucers. Whatever it was I saw, it seems to have been very much like what people have since claimed to be flying saucers'.

MILITARY MATTERS

On 10 October 1935 an off-duty military man took what was possibly Australia's first UFO photograph at Nobby's Head near Newcastle, New South Wales. Although the photos are now apparently unavailable, investigators who saw them during 1968–69 reported they showed 'a definite circular object with details seen well at enlargement'.

The crew of a Beaufort bomber flying at about 1,400 metres over Bass Strait during February 1944 bore witness to what may have been Australia's earliest 'electromagnetic' case. At about 2.30 a.m. the plane gained a most unusual companion. A 'dark shadow' appeared alongside the plane and kept pace with it, at a distance of only some 35 metres. The Beaufort was travelling at about 400 kilometres per hour. The object appeared to have a flickering light and flame belching from its rear end. Only about four and a half metres of the rear end of the UFO was visible to the bomber crew, apparently due to reflection of light from the exhaust. The strange object stayed with the bomber for some 20 minutes, during which time all radio and direction-finding instruments refused to function. It finally accelerated away from the plane at approximately three times the speed of the bomber. Upon landing, the pilot reported the incident to his base superiors, but claimed he was only laughed at. Such a reaction seems

extraordinary in retrospect, since it turns out that Beauforts figured heavily in an official RAAF list of planes that went missing without trace during World War Two in the Bass Strait area (which was not linked to any significant enemy activity). I have been told that the Beauforts had a mechanical problem that may have accounted for some of these losses.

THE 'LITTLE FELLAS' AT THE SIGN OF THE TAKAHE

Mrs E. Church, a sister-in-charge of the operating theatre of the Cashmere Sanatorium at Christchurch, New Zealand, encountered something extraordinary in August 1944 or 1945, while walking alone among the low hill slopes and scrub at the Sign of the Takahe, in the Port Hills area. Noticing a cloud coming in quickly, she decided to head back to catch a train. On the way, Mrs Church encountered a strange object resting on a rise, near the road. She approached it and stared at it for about 10 minutes. Before her was a bizarre sight.

The object was like an 'upturned saucer' and was primarily constructed of what looked like vertically laid tiles, 'that fitted together perfectly'. It appeared to be about seven metres wide and three metres high. Mrs Church thought, 'What will they invent next?' Then she saw the 'little fellas'. Small entities, no more than one and a quarter metres tall, one inside and one outside the object, were present. The one inside looked like a green-coloured form in a transparent, oblong packing case. They seemed to be watching the Industries Fair in the city below. The city lights were coming on. The figures seemed to have quite big heads in proportion to their bodies—nearly half their body height.

The cloud observed earlier came right down and enveloped the scene. Mrs Church decided to get closer. She got to within about five metres of the object, when she made a sound that drew the attention of the figure outside. He had a 'plastic' helmet which flipped over and he 'drifted' into the object in 'a kind of sliding movement', through a very small opening. A whirring

noise commenced and the craft rose slowly in a vertical fashion. She lost sight of it in the cloud. Mrs Church felt a sense of loss with its departure.

CHAPTER FOUR

—evaluating the evidence—

In the late 1940s coverage in the mass media made it apparent that people all around the world were seeing unidentified flying objects. As knowledge grew and patterns started to be seen, various researchers began to study the phenomenon seriously. During the 1950s evidence mounted. In some cases there were striking correlations between visual UFO sightings and radar evidence. While popular perception of the subject was often dominated by patently false stories from people who claimed to have met small men from Mars and gone for a ride in their flying saucers, there was a growing number of cases which could not be explained by even the most rigorous scientific investigation. In the 1960s reports of UFO landings and related 'physical traces' (where, for example, the chemical constitution of the soil where a landing took place is found to be different from the surrounding soil) became more prominent, and the first reports of alien abductions began to appear. The 1970s ushered in more diverse discoveries of physical evidence. In the late 1980s abduction reports proliferated, and by the 1990s were virtually dominating popular discussion of UFOs.

Dr Allen Hynek, an astronomer and long-time consultant to Project Blue Book, the United States Air Force's UFO study,

devised a simple classification system. Encounters are described as Close Encounters of the First Kind (close reports of UFOs), Close Encounters of the Second Kind (in which tangible physical evidence of a close encounter remains), Close Encounters of the Third Kind (sightings that involve animate beings or entities seen in relation to UFO sightings), and Nocturnal Lights, Daylight Disks and Radar Visual Events. Recently the term Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind has become associated with claims of UFO abduction. Less compellingly, the term CE5 has been created to describe claims of 'human-initiated or human-interactive contact' with UFOs. These involve attempts by enthusiasts, usually in America, to 'call down' UFOs by methods such as high intensity noise, searchlights, and meditation.

THE EVIDENCE

As a scientist, I am always aware of the fundamental position that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. To date mainstream UFO events (as distinct from abduction cases) have revealed some compelling evidence for their physical reality. The next challenge for researchers has always been to determine if that evidence is consistent with an alien reality. Similar evidence to support the reality of abduction events has been lacking or relatively uncompelling.

By 'mainstream UFO events' I am referring to the traditional mix of evidence that has built up about the UFO phenomenon. The sort of thing I am talking about is the event with associated physical evidence which you will encounter in this book, such as the following.

- Physical traces from UFO landing cases. Two examples are the extraordinary Rosedale case of 1980 and the famous 1966 Tully 'UFO nest' affair.
- Electromagnetic effects in close encounter incidents, the best known being cases where a car has stalled. One example of this occurred at Norah Head in New South Wales in February 1973.
- Visual encounters confirmed by radar reports. An excellent

example is the famous encounter of Royal Australian Navy pilot, Lieutenant Shamus O'Farrell, on 31 August 1954.

• Physical effects on witnesses, such as the alleged fatalities after the 1959 Cooktown encounter.

• There is also some photographic evidence, such as the Ben Boyd UFO movie of 1976.

Events with associated physical evidence allow serious science to be attempted. Investigators can examine sites in detail, using such techniques as site grids, soil sampling from affected sites (and from nearby sites as controls) and a host of other physical tests at the site. Samples are then analysed in laboratories to determine if so-called 'anomalies' are present. One example would be if the chemicals present in the soil where a UFO landing is suspected differ from those in the surrounding soil, and where there is no apparent natural explanation for this difference. This can be a long, drawn-out process due to the need for accuracy and precision. It is critical for these investigations to be done in a methodical and rigorous way, so that in the event of intriguing anomalies being found, their legitimacy can be beyond doubt.

The initial determination of an anomaly does not, of course, necessarily mean a UFO has landed, because anomalies can have all manner of explanations. But it is an indicator that further research is warranted. The 1980 Rosedale landing, where possible landing marks were found and a water tank was discovered to have been emptied after a witness saw a UFO hovering over it, was one of the most compelling cases I have been involved in. Samples taken by the author were subjected to extensive analysis, and significant differences in the chlorine content of the soil at the landing site and away from it were found. This serves to add interest to the account of the witness who claims to have seen the UFO hovering above the water tank.

Investigators can try to get a sense of the size of a flying object using the concept of relative size. Witnesses are asked to compare the size of the object they saw to something held at arms length, either the spread of fingers or an object like a coin. Using some fairly basic geometry, this information can enable

the flying object's size to be calculated, provided some estimate of the object's distance from the viewer is available.

UFO FLAPS—A CONTEXT FOR SCIENTIFIC STUDY

One of the most useful situations for a UFO researcher is to be present during a UFO 'flap', when UFOs appear over a period of several days or even longer. Sometimes these situations are referred to by researchers as 'UFO windows'. UFO-active locations in Australia, described in this book, include St George in Queensland and Kempsey in New South Wales. Numerous localities experience intense but short-lived waves, such as Tyringham-Dundurrabin in New South Wales, during 1973, Leitchville-Echuca in Victoria, and Gisborne in New Zealand during 1977–78, and Cressy in Tasmania in 1960. A challenge exists for researchers to determine if there is something about these areas that makes them conducive to UFO sightings. If the factors can be determined, then it provides researchers with a powerful means to predict localities that might be the focus of UFO 'flaps'. Various hypotheses include the presence of power transmission lines or large mineral deposits beneath the earth.

IFOs, VENUS & PARANOIA

UFO investigators try to establish the nature of UFO sightings reported to them. All sorts of resources and methodologies are applied to determine if the sightings is an IFO, an Identified Flying Object, or a bona fide UFO. Of course experienced investigators realise that the majority of UFO reports do not involve bona fide UFOs. Many misinterpretations are possible. Astronomical sources figure heavily. Venus, the brightest planet in the sky, is a common cause of false sightings. It is an easy mistake to make—experienced air traffic controllers have been known to attempt to 'land' Venus, mistaking its brilliance for a plane's landing lights.

Sometimes matters get spectacularly out of hand. For exam-

ple, during September 1972 the early morning sightings of a bright white light over Taree, New South Wales, had locals and the *Daily Mirror* newspaper enthralled for days, until Venus was confirmed as the culprit. In July 1965 Canberra air traffic controllers sighted a strange light. Venus was suggested as the explanation and variously rejected or accepted depending on whom you talked to. It almost certainly was Venus.

An early morning UFO sighting over Narrabeen, Sydney, in May 1993, complete with home video, had two young men convinced they had captured evidence of UFOs. When another researcher and myself reconstructed the incident with the men at the actual points of observation, Long Reef Peninsula and Frenchs Forest, it was obvious that the 'UFO' was clearly a misinterpretation of Venus. The two young men were not convinced and claimed that their film was similar to the images of alleged UFOs caught on numerous videos taken from Mexico City during a total eclipse in July, 1991. However, anyone who has looked carefully at the Mexican film, reconstructed the sky using astronomical computer software, and talked to eclipse and astronomy enthusiasts who were present in Mexico at the time, would conclude that this film footage does not show UFOs. I have done all these things and it is clear that the 'UFO' on the film is in fact the planet Venus, seen under the unusual conditions of the eclipse. Some advocates of the Mexican eclipse 'UFO' accuse anyone who doubts them of being part of the so-called 'UFO cover-up'. Indeed, a strong conspiratorial bent has entered the less critical elements of 'ufology', as the systematic study of UFOs is known. Researchers who advocate careful critical approaches are often seen as sinister players in the 'cover-up'. But, as the following story illustrates, an uncritical approach to the evidence simply makes the whole subject of UFO research vulnerable to ridicule.

THE ORANGE LIGHT HOAX

In 1992 there were many reports of orange balls of light over Sydney. Sometimes groups of orange lights were seen flying in apparent formation. By the middle of the year, reports of the

lights were very frequent. I even saw them myself. An explanation had been likely from the very beginning, but getting firm evidence proved difficult. The approach of UFO research groups and enthusiasts varied, as always, depending on their inclinations. As a general principle, serious researchers accept that most reports are probably explainable, and therefore the logical approach must be to take a sceptical view of them. This should particularly be the practice when, as happened in Sydney, the spate of activity usually increased from Thursday to Sunday each week, peaking on Saturday nights. If these were aliens, they seemed to be aliens who recognised the weekend.

The lights were generally slow-moving, and lasted for no more than 15 minutes. Changes in direction were often noted. Numerous videos captured the 'interlopers', and some UFO groups publicly welcomed the sightings as providing genuine evidence. A particularly spectacular outburst of orange light activity occurred over Sydney's northern suburbs on 17 November 1992. Up to 23 orange lights were seen slowly moving across the sky. Researchers, police, the RAAF and media were besieged by reports. I advised local police of what to expect, and soon they were recovering burning garbage bags coming down out of the sky. A video taken that night showed the formation with one piece coming away. Some speculated over smaller craft leaving a 'mothership'. The reality was that bits of the burning material, firestarters, or parts of the bags were coming away.

It disturbs me that some UFO groups and researchers still claim that the orange lights provided useful evidence of UFO activity. Such woolly thinking gives UFO research a bad name, and allows the sceptics to lump all researchers into one basket for the purposes of ridicule.

ROSWELL

Since about 1987 there has been a focusing on two extreme forms of UFO evidence, namely 'UFO crash retrieval' accounts, where it is suspected the US government has physical evidence of extra-terrestrials, and UFO abduction reports. I was lecturing at

the international Mutual UFO Network conference at Washington DC in June 1987 when these two controversial elements of the UFO mystery first gained international publicity. The focus of interest in crash retrievals was the notorious MJ12 documents, allegedly a report to the president on the 1947 UFO crash near Roswell in America. The Roswell crash provoked much debate, a number of books, an unprecedented US Air Force report designed to bury the whole saga, a documentary, and some very dubious 'alien autopsy' film footage.

The abduction issue involved the best-selling books *Communion* by Whitley Strieber and *Intruders* by Budd Hopkins, and the fact that for the first time a number of people claiming to have had abduction experiences had the courage to come forward and appear on a public stage at the conference. There was a sense of something extraordinary unfolding, and the UFO landscape has never quite been the same since.

THE ABDUCTION EVIDENCE

In my own research into Australian abduction stories, from my earliest work in the 1970s to more recent times, it has been difficult to avoid the conclusion that abduction cases have perhaps told me more about the human condition than they have about UFOs. Many might argue the point, but I can only speak my mind here, weighing evidence uncovered in almost two decades of investigating abduction stories in Australia, and scrutinising interviews with over one hundred people who claim to have been abducted by aliens. During that period, some cases have stood up to testing. But the majority have been conspicuously devoid of compelling physical evidence, or of any sort of independent verification.

With the recent popularisation of the abduction subject through television shows such as *The X-Files*, *Sightings*, and *The Extraordinary*, and the New Age flavour that has entered many stories, along with the bona fide concerns about the indiscriminate use of hypnosis, false memory syndrome, and amateur investigations, a veritable minefield has been created. In this

uncertain setting, witnesses, researchers, health professionals, and therapists can all be casualties, unless cautious and appropriate methods of assisting and researching the witnesses are followed.

Hypnosis has been utilised as a controversial tool to try to pierce the experiences of 'missing time' often reported by abductees. Its indiscriminate use in amateur investigations can have unfortunate ramifications. Psychologist and research scientist Dr Richard Haines has developed a 'Three Stage Hypnosis' procedure to minimise any possible leading of witnesses. Its use provides for the possibility of more (valid) information to emerge through hypnosis. It is critical that the highly suggestible states of hypnosis are not used to saddle witnesses with 'memories' that are in fact fictions based on leading questions, exposure to the alien abduction story in the media, and fantasy.

EVALUATING THE DATA

Unlike abduction cases, mainstream UFO events have provided researchers with a growing body of compelling evidence. Much of it has focused on physical evidence cases. These provide evidence that can be looked at carefully by scientists. My own background in the physical sciences has attracted me to the UFO landing cases where physical traces at alleged landing sites have been found. Most involve physical effects on the terrain, such as flattened, burnt or swirled grass, ground imprints, damage to terrain and flora, residues and even occasional artefacts which are alleged pieces of a UFO.

What has been difficult to achieve is the sustained and detailed investigation and analyses that such traces require. Dr Allen Hynek has expressed a frustration I share: 'Here we come face to face with the charge that after thirty years of dealing with UFO reports we still have no really convincing hard data, that is, parts of a UFO, unimpeachable residues from soil samples, unequivocal evidence that a UFO caused damage to animate or inanimate matter. Yet the fact is that we do have large amounts of such evidence . . . I grow livid when such charges of no data

are made. After years of frustration without the funds to pay for adequate laboratory and other professional work, I bristle at the lack of understanding on the part of the scientific sceptics, who wouldn't get to first base without well-funded research projects with staff, travel and laboratory facilities . . .

'All we have are abortive, often amateurish attempts at data gathering, data analysis, and feeble attempts at laboratory studies (on a charity basis, of course), all of which dwindle into inconclusion and frustration . . . It is my contention that hard data may well have been present in many UFO cases but their discovery and definitive establishment has repeatedly gone by default for lack of professional funded treatment. It has always been a case of too little and too late, necessitated by the use of volunteers bolstered only by their unselfish devotion to the pursuit of an overwhelming mystery'.

TRANS-EN-PROVENCE—A TURNING POINT?

Around the time Dr Hynek was making this biting assessment, the winds of change were already apparent. On 9 January 1981 a case occurred in France, which in one sense marked the coming-of-age of the physical evidence experience: an extensive scientific investigation was undertaken of a UFO landing case, and some intriguing anomalies were found by the official French UFO agency GEPAN (a group within the French equivalent to NASA, whose acronym translates to Study Group into Unidentified Aerospatial Phenomena). A witness, Renato Nicolai, saw a UFO land briefly in the grounds of his residence near Draguignan, Trans-en-Provence. The UFO left behind a 2.4 metre ring. Extensive investigative and analytical follow-up occurred under the auspices of GEPAN, which concluded, 'We cannot give any precise interpretation for this remarkable set of results, but there is nevertheless confirmation from them that a very significant incident took place on this spot'.

I met with the then GEPAN head, Jean Jacques Velasco, in Washington in 1987. He confirmed the importance of the Trans-en-Provence case, and indicated that an electromagnetic field,

rather than some irradiating energy source, caused the unusual plant and soil changes found. What was also extraordinary about the incident was the remarkable extent of scientific investigation into it. Indeed, one could argue that if the extent of the science applied to this one case became the norm in all cases of UFO physical evidence events, the course of the UFO controversy would emerge from the marginalised fringe. On the basis of the physical trace evidence and the collective evidence contained within the whole spectrum of UFO events, I believe a physical dimension to the UFO phenomenon has been substantiated. The question is whether or not physical evidence is consistent with an alien reality.

CHAPTER FIVE

—1945 to 1953—

While many sightings of UFOs were made in Australia during the period from 1945 to 1953, few were widely publicised at the time. Many were reported later. Here is one example.

In October 1949 two men observed a UFO near Townsville, Queensland. One of them, Mr J. Baxter, recalled the event in a 1967 letter to the UFO Investigation Centre. 'I was a commercial fisherman, fishing at the time for Spanish mackerel, with a chap named John Campbell . . . It was a bad season, and we were fishing desperately to get out of the red. We would not have been easily distracted. We were fishing off North Palm Island . . . on a clear, bright, sunny day, with perfect visibility, when we saw this object—a bright, shining, metallic cigar-shaped construction, over 30 metres long, poised about 25 metres above the sea, and about 500 metres distant. There was no sign of wings, propellers, or portholes . . . At the time we were making circles in the boat, to try and excite the mackerel . . . We would lose sight of it as we turned for a minute or maybe two. But we kept watching it, mainly because we were intrigued by the fact that it was motionless, just poised there, between sea and sky . . . We had a noisy engine, so we did not hear any noise from it. We

watched it, as we made our tight circles, for maybe half an hour, and while I was intently watching, the bow swung between us and it, and it was gone—without any fuss, or even a contrail [vapour trail]. This was incredible, and really rocked us, that anything could get out of sight on a clear day, almost instantaneously. Not even the modern planes of today could equal such a performance'.

EARLY FLOURISHES

The interest in flying saucers in Australia began in 1950 with reports from Geelong and Avoca, in Victoria, during June and July. The earliest official sighting report I have found in the Directorate of Air Force Intelligence files was a nocturnal light account at Bass Point, New South Wales, on 16 July 1950. The growing number of reports involving official agencies and highly regarded sources served to heighten official interest, initially from two quarters, the Royal Australian Air Force and the Department of Civil Aviation. The following report is striking not only because of the contents and the calibre of the witness. Just one day earlier, the Minister for Air, William McMahon (a future Prime Minister) had stated in parliament that reports of flying saucers were 'probably based on flights of imagination'.

The chief test pilot for the Government Aircraft Factories, W. Scott, was not given to 'flights of imagination', yet at midday on 14 August 1952, while flying in a Vampire aircraft at about 11,000 metres near Rockhampton, Queensland, he observed something he could not explain. Looking east, towards the coast, Scott saw a large, circular light, at a lower elevation, which could not be estimated due to bad ground haze. It was the colour of an ordinary, incandescent light globe. After approximately one minute, between six and 10 small lights appeared to come from the main light. The smaller lights appeared to surround the bright light for about two minutes before disappearing. After a further two minutes the big light also disappeared.

The report of that incident did not become public knowledge. It may have been embarrassing for the minister if it had. The

report remained classified until I found it in the Department of Civil Aviation's UFO files.

In July 1952 in response to a huge wave of sightings at the time, including one of his own, Edgar Jarrold, a 33 year-old foundry office worker, started Australia's first civilian flying saucer organisation. Initially a one man affair, the Australia Flying Saucer Bureau, based in Sydney, was by May 1953 publishing Australia's first UFO publication, the *Australian Flying Saucer Magazine.* On 6 February 1953 five Victorians founded the Australian Flying Saucer Investigation Committee. The organisation's chairman was journalist Donald Thomson. In South Australia, during 1953, the Australian Flying Saucer Club was started by Fred Stone. (See Appendix A of this book for a brief history of Australian UFO research). The first sighting wave of any significance occurred in May 1953 with the Mackay Incident as its cornerstone. On 10 May the crew of an Australian National Airlines DC3 aircraft observed what was later described as 'a strange object like a lighted glass dome' manoeuvring around them for some five minutes. The UFO was also observed from the ground by Mackay airport personnel.

THE HOLY GRAIL OF AUSTRALIAN UFOLOGY?

While civilian interest was growing, extensive official interest focused on daylight movie footage of an unidentified 'missile' over Port Moresby, taken by Tom Drury, the Deputy Director of the Department of Civil Aviation in Papua New Guinea, then an Australian territory. The case is important because of the expertise of the witness, the presence of other witnesses, the capture of the image on film, and the subsequent disappearance of that section of the film while it was in the hands of Australian and American security organisations.

On 23 August 1953 Tom Drury was using his movie camera at about midday. With his wife and children he was standing on the coast road overlooking the Flying Boat Base, filming a native boy spearing fish. The sky was clear, when a small cloud began to form. Drury did not see it at first, and his wife drew his

attention to it. ‘I watched it rapidly build up into a thick white mass of cumulus’, Drury later said. ‘There were no other clouds in the sky and there seemed nothing to account for it . . . I had never seen a cloud form up by itself like that. Being very interested in meteorological phenomena, I decided to take a film of it’. The cloud continued to grow in size until, after a few minutes, a silver object came out of it. Drury continued filming. ‘It was elongated in shape like a bullet’, he recalled. ‘It was metallic and flashed in the sun’. The object climbed very fast, with a vapour trail behind it marking its trajectory. It was gone in a few seconds. According to Drury, ‘It was travelling at an immense speed, at least five times as fast as a jet plane travelling at the speed of sound . . . In spite of the supersonic speed and the comparative nearness of the object, there was no sound whatsoever’.

Greatly perplexed, Drury drove straight to the airport and checked with air traffic Control, who told him they had no knowledge of any aircraft in that area. A handwritten note in Directorate of Air Force Intelligence files specifically states that the object was not a secret missile fired from the Woomera rocket range in South Australia.

The film was developed in Australia and Drury claims that it showed the silver object. It was then handed over to the Australian government, from where it was sent to America for examination. On its return, the segment showing the silver object had been cut from the film.

It is important to remember that government UFO investigations of the 1950s were usually influenced by the climate of the Cold War, with the first objective being to ascertain whether there might be any Russian source for the phenomena being investigated. Late in 1982 when I was given permission to examine the Department of Aviation UFO files, I specifically requested to see any holdings on the Drury affair. What I saw was one file classified SECRET and another entitled ‘Photographs of Unexplained Aerial Object over New Guinea forwarded by T.C. Drury’. It was also originally classified SECRET and had been ‘lost’ over the years.

It seems clear that the Australian military were looking at the Drury film in the light of the ‘red peril’. Tom Drury himself

indicated to me he felt that the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), which is responsible for internal security in Australia, including counter-espionage, was involved. I interviewed the two ASIO operatives who were in Papua New Guinea at that time. Predictably, neither was terribly informative, with one of them stating that if they had any involvement it was only as a courier for the film's passage to Melbourne, then headquarters of the RAAF's Directorate of Air Force Intelligence, and also the headquarters for DCA and ASIO. An ASIO document dated 15 January 1973 states that 'copies of the film were passed to the USAF and the RAF. Drury is said to have received back a print of the film but without any UFO shots'.

Tom Drury feels that the processing and analysis required to study his film while it was in the hands of the intelligence agencies might have destroyed it. It is known that the film did go to the United States for study. There it appeared to have come under the scrutiny of the CIA's photographic analysis group

A 1955 RAAF UFO file indicates that DAFI had sold prints of the 1953 UFO pictures 'at 4/9 a pop' to civilian researchers. Edgar Jarrold and Fred Stone were among those who secured copies of these prints. Jarrold's publication, the *Australian Flying Saucer Magazine*, stated that 'ninety-four prints examined reveal conclusively the existence of a shiny, disc-like object whose behaviour could by no wildest stretching of the imagination be attributed to a bird, balloon, orthodox aircraft, hallucination, piece of windblown paper, natural phenomena, or a meteor. The cloud from which the silvery object . . . emerged is distinctly visible. On emerging from it at a right angle with no other clouds apparent in a clear sky, still pictures reveal vivid confirmation of Mr Drury's report that an object, looking at first like a tiny brilliant sun, dashed rapidly from the cloud, heading north-west. The object flashed brightly in the sun as it made an abrupt right-angle turn soon after emerging from the dark cloud, zooming straight up with no reduction in speed. Upon reaching a greater altitude, it levelled off again, with another abrupt right-angled turn, resuming its flight until out of camera range altogether . . . On effecting such turns, a greater expanse of the object's upper surface becomes visible, causing it to present a

featureless, disc-like appearance, which is in sharp contrast to first glimpses showing an object somewhat blurred in focus, and shaped like a theoretically fast moving, very bright star'.

Jarrold wrote years later, 'I was able to view blown-up still pictures made from this film before it left Australia due to the American request and am still, I think, the only civilian ever to have seen them'. (Documentation I examined in the DCA and DAFI files contradicts Jarrold's claims to have been the only one to have seen the prints and to have seen them before the original footage was sent to the United States. A letter to Jarrold from Mr E.W. Hicks, Secretary of the Department of Air, dated 2 December 1953, states that 'the film has been sent to the United States for technical processing, and it is therefore not possible to accede to your request [for contact prints] until its return, which, it is anticipated, will be early in the New Year'). 'The pictures', Jarrold wrote, 'show what could only be accepted as an extra-terrestrial object, the flight path and behaviour of which rule out any man-made object or meteor. The film was made about mid-day against a cloudless sky and unfortunately the object was filmed from a distance, thus providing little real knowledge of the object's shape and composition, main importance being attached to its most unusual actions and behaviour'.

It should be noted that Drury himself observed no discontinuity in the UFO's flight path. Whether 90 degree turns were really recorded on the film, or were due to camera movement, processing, analysis or just plain extravagant interpretations based on poor data, we may never know. The references to 90 degree turns all stem from Jarrold. No one else, who either saw the film or prints, made such claims.

William McMahon was quoted in the press in late January 1954 as saying he had 'had the film flown to the US to be enlarged'. He further stated that the object shown in the film 'was so small that a detailed study of the film was not possible until technicians had enlarged it'. The official files also record a letter from DAFI to Mr Wiggins of the DCA which states, "The 'Flying Saucer" film taken by Drury, at Port Moresby in 1953 and forwarded by you on 22 Sept. is returned herewith. We have subjected the film to detailed study and processing but have been

unable to establish anything other than the blur of light [which] appears to move across the film. In spite of this disappointment we would like to thank you for your co-operation in this matter'.

The original Drury film, which allegedly held the UFO image, became something of a holy grail for Australian ufology. A number of efforts were made over the years to secure the film and further information about the affair. All met with failure. A previously confidential RAAF document handwritten in 1966 and entitled 'Summary of the effort made to rediscover present whereabouts of the allegedly "excised" frames of Mr T. Drury's Famous 1953 movie film of the Port Moresby "UFO sighting"', concluded: 'The upshot is that the "excised" frames [are] either still in DAFI archives, have been destroyed or (perish the thought) have been lost'.

CHAPTER SIX

—Government cover-up?—

A popular and well-known conspiracy theory is that the American government has physical evidence of the existence of extraterrestrial life, in the form of crashed UFOs and even the bodies of aliens, which it is determined to hide from the public. It is less widely realised that versions of this theory are also to be found in Australia, and the following are among some of the more interesting I have been told. I do not find them compelling, because of the anecdotal and apocryphal nature of these stories. If UFO crashes occur it seems likely they would do so in a number of countries, and it is highly unlikely that all the governments involved would want to, or be able to, keep them secret. But the stories persist, and the best of them are worth recording.

The Defence Research Centre at Salisbury, in South Australia, which is run by the RAAF and the Defence Science and Technology Organisation of the Department of Defence, is Australia's leading weapons research and development facility. It has top security and employs over 2,700 scientists, engineers, technicians and support staff. One of its achievements is Project Winnin and the Hoveroc, a radio-controlled missile-shaped rocket that can be launched and hover and move sideways. It is used as a

decoy for anti-ship missiles. Next door to the centre is the RAAF's Edinburgh air base, used for research and testing of aircraft. If the Australian government or military wanted to hide an alien spacecraft, this large and secret complex seems a likely place to choose, especially if the wreckage came from nearby desert areas.

In 1990 I was contacted by a woman who arranged to meet me to pass on a story she had been told by a senior Royal Australian Air Force mechanic. It involved Salisbury. According to the woman, the mechanic had worked at the facility on a number of craft with unfamiliar mechanical systems. Most were strangely-shaped and one was round. He was told that some of these were UFOs and that alien bodies had been recovered from them. There were several different species of alien, but two of them were externally like human beings, except that their internal organs were different.

Another story, told to me by a well-known journalist, involves a television camera crew which was allowed into Edinburgh to make part of a corporate video for the RAAF, and which entered an off-limits building by mistake. There they found a saucer-shaped aircraft, and were about to examine it when military personnel found them and ushered them away, insisting that they not disclose what they had seen.

Another story, told to me by a businessman who travels extensively abroad, concerns a document describing an Australian top secret operation called Project Apotheosis, concerning the transport of aliens from Salisbury to a secret destination.

A more complicated story was told to me by a man who claims to have been involved in actions following a UFO crash on the Nullarbor Plain soon after it had happened. Two men, one an American, were on the Eyre Highway near the border between South Australia and Western Australia in 1977 when they saw a purple-green fireball crash nearby. They came to the place and one of them entered the craft where he found two aliens, one dead and the other uttering a slight squealing noise. Both in appearance were pot-bellied, about one and a half metres tall, and had long, thin arms. Their eyes were large and black, and there

were no ears or hair. When the man emerged from the wreck he found military personnel on the scene, who arrested his friend and himself and took them away from the crash site. The American disappeared (apparently he was absent without leave from the armed services) and the Australian, who was also a soldier, was put in custody for two weeks and persuaded that what he had seen was a normal aircraft crash. He claims that he has subsequently heard of several other UFO crashes which have been cleared up in great secrecy by the military.

How much is known about the activities of the Australian government regarding UFOs in general? Intrigued by bizarre stories gathered over many years of UFO research, I determined to find out and after many requests was eventually allowed to see virtually all of the Royal Australian Air Force's Directorate of Air Force Intelligence files. However, I have not seen the files of more secret organisations, such as Defence Intelligence or ASIO, and it is intriguing to speculate on their possible contents. For example, I have seen a Joint Intelligence Organisation document indicating the existence of something called the BOLIDE file, apparently relating to a 'rapid intervention' capability on behalf of the security forces in the event of 'foreign hardware' crashes on Australian soil. (A similar capability exists in the United States, code-named Project Moondust). So I do not pretend to know everything about the Australian government's involvement with UFOs. Nevertheless, I have seen more than any other non-military person. What follows is based upon what I discovered when I read the files.

On 11 January 1982 I arrived at the Russell Offices of the Department of Defence in Canberra, the first civilian researcher to be allowed to examine the RAAF files. For almost thirty years, the RAAF had been the official body invested with the responsibility for investigating UFO or, as they were sometimes known, UAS (unusual aerial sighting) reports in Australia and its territories. The only public record of case investigations by the RAAF until 1982 had been the 'summaries of Unusual Aerial Sightings'. These consisted of the date, time, location, very brief details of the event and 'possible cause'. Nine of these summaries were

produced, covering the years between 1960 and 1977.

The summaries came about as a result of differences between sections of the Air Force over how the UFO issue should be handled. During the 1960s the Directorate of Air Force Intelligence was keen to play it down, because it felt there was nothing in it and it would be best not to excite the public. The Directorate of Public Relations, on the other hand, argued for the removal of restrictions on the sharing of unclassified UFO information with the public. They noted, 'By continuing with the old policy of playing our UFO cards close to the chest, we only foster the incorrect (but nevertheless widely held) belief that we have much vital information to hide'. The Director of Public Relations stated in a Minute Paper to the Director of Air Force Intelligence, 'while security is not DPR's affair, our relations with the general public (cranks and all) certainly are and I feel strongly, from the PR point of view, that we are handling this whole UFO business in an unnecessarily rigid and unimaginative way'.

The RAAF's attitude to its responsibilities regarding UFOs had never been completely clear. Outsiders had come up with two views of how the air force had approached its duties in this area. One was that it was covering up the knowledge of UFOs it had gained through its investigations, perhaps in concert with the US Air Force. The second, less dramatic, view was that the RAAF had long since decided that UFO investigation was a waste of time, but continued to do it because government wanted some official involvement so that, when sightings received extensive publicity, it could reassure the general public that 'something is being done'. The discontinuation of the summaries had the effect of increasing the suspicions of people holding either view, as did the Air Force's lethargy in replying to enquiries from researchers such as myself. In response, I argued that giving a reputable researcher access to information that could then be disseminated to other interested parties would be the most efficient way of quashing any false rumours about the RAAF's role. The RAAF finally agreed to permit me to examine their files, which covered the period from 1950 to 1984. Later I was able to examine all the existing UFO files held by the Department of Aviation at their Bureau of Air Safety Investigation in Melbourne.

These two investigations helped provide me with a detailed and unique understanding of official involvement in UFO investigations in Australia. Today there is no doubt in my mind that the Royal Australian Air Force considers its involvement in UFO investigation to be a waste of time, albeit a duty it has to perform—or at least be seen to perform. Sometimes it does not take this duty seriously, and this is reflected in its habit of often describing the cause of sightings as 'unknown', even though this seems to reflect a lack of interest in carrying out a thorough investigation rather than genuine doubt following upon thorough research. The term 'unknown', in RAAF parlance, has been a moveable feast. In 1973 I was advised it meant a classification that could arise from three different categories, namely: 'a. Insufficient information provided to adequately evaluate the sightings; b. Late submission of reports thus precluding adequate investigation; and c. Thorough investigation of a detailed report resulting in no factual determination of the cause. Approximately 1 per cent of all sighting reports submitted to the RAAF are non-attributable as per sub para c. above, and in future, cause details in the summaries will be more explicit'.

In 1980 I was advised that: 'The term "unknown" is used to denote the small percentage of UAS reports that remain unresolved because of insufficient information being supplied, late receipt of report denying timely investigation, remoteness of sighting location, and insufficient current scientific knowledge being available to provide an explanation'.

Another habit the Air Force has is to present 'explanations' of UFO sightings which might reassure the general public but which are plainly implausible. For example, 'tornado-like meteorological phenomena' was suggested for some of the most striking cases the RAAF investigated, such as close encounters at Willow Grove (1963), Vaucluse Beach (1965) and Tully (1966). 'Plasma' was a popular explanation around 1967, since it was an 'explanation' being pushed in America at the time. It was provided by the RAAF as an explanation in a striking close encounter near Burrenjuck Dam in 1967. It seemed evident on even the most cursory analysis that such weak explanations showed signs of

little scientific enquiry, but much political and military myopia.

The quality of RAAF investigations into both prosaic and significant 'unknown' reports has drawn criticism from many sources, perhaps none more pointed than Dr Claude Poher, as expressed in 1976 correspondence with the RAAF. Poher led France's first major official UFO research group, GEPAN, part of the French equivalent to NASA. After the Australian Department of Defence sent him some of their annual summaries of UFO 'investigations', Dr Poher wrote, 'May I suggest, for transmission to personnel responsible for this work, that some of the "possible causes" mentioned in these summaries are not acceptable'. Poher gave as an example an observation at Wickham, New South Wales, on 4 April 1975, of a 'silver object about the size of a cricket ball', which the summary lists, for the 'possible cause', as Venus . Poher concluded: 'The planet was under the horizon, so the cause "Venus" is ridiculous. There are many other impossibilities like this in the papers you sent me. I think one should avoid publication of these documents without a careful check by specialists of the different scientific disciplines involved, so as not to have, one day, a journalist or a scientist holding the services of the Australian Department of Defence up to ridicule'.

The reason for such 'impossibilities' is the subject of some speculation. I was told the 'inside story' by someone working in the Department of Defence. His account is difficult to substantiate, for obvious reasons. But it seems plausible and, for the record, here it is.

'While America had an official attitude [of genuine interest in finding out about the sources of UFOs] our Air Force simply has no expectations of getting any other verdict [than normal explanation]. Their attitude is to try to quieten everything down. Be bland as possible and hope that everything goes away. At times they were actually rather rude to witnesses, tending to ridicule where possible. Generally speaking the men that are handling it wish they weren't. But in the Air Force it is essential to look as though you're good at your job, to get promotion. The attitude is to look as though they are solving all the cases, while looking for an excuse to write it all off.

'The reason why in the 1960s a number of reports got out on sightings and explanations was that the Directorate of Air Force Intelligence (DAFI) were handling it and not telling anybody, and Public Relations (DPR) were the ones getting all the queries. DPR wrote to DAFI saying, "This is getting a bit sick, we don't know what to say—give us an answer!" DAFI said, "Look, we don't know. We haven't got any answers. We just can't tell". DPR said, "Well, hand us the files and we'll get the answers". They got the files and then gave answers according to what the DPR people thought, which were ill-thought explanations without any recourse to the honesty of it.

'I had a look at the Venus group of "explanations" and it just so happened that of the 15 or so sightings attributed to Venus, there was not one occasion when Venus was above the horizon at the time. At one time a man in Tasmania saw a bright light in the sky and it was so bright he put on his sunglasses. That was written down as Venus.

'The Air Force published the lists ad nauseam for about 10 years from 1966 and it was all this PR man who concocted everything, and DAFI really had nothing to do with it . . . So, generally speaking I found the Air Force bordering on a sham, really. They were not honest. Their purpose is to allay the fears of the public and to try to get everybody off their back. They don't want politicians on their backs. They don't want the public on their backs. They want to be left alone to do their other job'.

The severity of the above claim about the 'honesty' of the exercise may possibly be mitigated if one considers that, if the public relations people created the summaries (and it is certain they created at least the first one) then they may have done so with recourse only to limited information from DAFI. I found some evidence that this was in fact the case.

THE SECRET TURNER REPORT

The Drury affair of 1953 and a huge increase in reports in 1954, particularly in Victoria, led to the Directorate of Air Force Intelligence asking Melbourne University professor, Harry Turner,

to undertake a classified 'scientific appreciation' of the official reports held on file. In his report Turner recommended greater official interest, particularly in visual reports supported by radar. He concluded: 'The evidence presented by the reports held by RAAF tend to support the . . . conclusion . . . that certain strange aircraft have been observed to behave in a manner suggestive of extra-terrestrial origin'.

Official reaction to the Turner report was curious. In studying the official files, Turner had referred to retired Marine Corps Major Donald Keyhoe's US Air Force reports, described in his best selling book, *Flying Saucers from Outer Space*, and suggested the RAAF seek official USAF confirmation of the legitimacy of Keyhoe's data. Turner wrote: 'if one assumes these intelligence reports are authentic, then the evidence presented is such that it is difficult to assume any interpretation other than that UFOs are being observed'. The Director of Air Force Intelligence did seek out official confirmation from America. The Australian Joint Service Staff in Washington replied: 'I have discussed with the USAF the status of Major Keyhoe. I understand that his book is written in such a way as to convey the impression that his statements are based on official documents, and there is some suggestion that he has made improper use of information to which he had access while he was serving with the Marine Corps. He has, however, no official status whatsoever and a dim view is taken officially of both him and his works'.

So when it came to considering Turner's classified report, the Department of Air Force Intelligence concluded: 'Professor Turner accepted Keyhoe's book as being authentic and based on official releases. Because Turner places so much weight on Keyhoe's work he emphasised the need to check Keyhoe's reliability. [The Australian Joint Service Staff communication] removes Key hoe's works as a prop for Turner's work, so its value is very much reduced'. Turner's findings and recommendations were thereby found to be impractical and not justified.

The problem with all this was that it was based on an act of conscious or unconscious misrepresentation on the part of the US Air Force. They were engaged in a campaign to undermine the popularity of Donald Keyhoe's books. While Keyhoe may

have slightly beat up his USAF data, the intelligence reports quoted by him and used by Turner to support his conclusions to DAFI were in fact authentic. Eventually the USAF themselves admitted this. But in the meantime, political myopia from both the US and Australian military had effectively scuttled Australia's first serious flirtation with scientific investigation of UFOs. The Turner report was kept secret, until I came across it in the RAAF files. This incident provides fairly strong evidence that the RAAF has just not been interested in the whole UFO issue.

THE EMERGENCE OF AN 'INVISIBLE COLLEGE'

The RAAF files indicate that in the mid-1960s Dr Michael J. Duggin, of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation's National Standards Laboratory, Division of Physics, was trying to undertake serious scientific research into UFOs. Duggin, an Australian physicist, had recently joined the informal, international, 'invisible college' of collaborating scientists undertaking UFO research, which had been started by American astronomer and USAF consultant, Allen Hynek. Duggin contacted Squadron Leader Baxter of the RAAF in his initial attempts to get official cooperation. In a 20 December 1966 letter to Baxter he wrote, 'Dr Vallée, an astronomer at the University of Chicago and Dr Hynek, whom I saw in Chicago a few weeks ago, are very interested in the UFO phenomenon from the point of view of a scientific investigation. So am I and so are many other scientists in other countries. These gentlemen have carefully documented files on about 6,000 sightings in many different countries. Many of these are doubtful but there are a large number which we cannot explain in terms of natural phenomena. These are the cases of interest . . .

'Present investigations have indicated the existence of certain patterns in this phenomenon but unfortunately much more data is required before great reliance can be placed on the results of such an investigation. Several reports from isolated observers, contiguous in time and consistent in description, would appear to suggest that perhaps some observations are made sequentially

along great circle routes. Again, more data is needed. "Landing" reports have been quite frequent in South America and, I believe, in the Southern Hemisphere as a whole. What is needed is information, (1) as soon as it is turned in, so that the case can be correlated with other information, if possible, at Dearborne Observatory, (2) results of the follow-up. I would like to investigate cases myself where possible.

'I am enclosing a letter from Dr Hynek to substantiate my request. I stress that this is a scientific investigation and that although my interest is extracurricular, I feel that it is very necessary to subject those unexplained phenomena to scientific investigation'.

The Directorate of Air Force Intelligence (DAFI) reviewed Duggin's request. A Department of Air minute paper from Wing Commander N.G. Marshall D/DAFI (Ops) to DAFI addressed the issue: 'You will note that one of the scientists involved in this UFO investigation is Dr Hynek who is stated to be the scientific advisor on UFOs to the United States. Dr Duggin, however is acting in an extracurricular capacity.

'You will note that these scientists are mainly interested in the unexplained UFOs, but as far as I can make out they would like information on all sightings. As you know, we already have an official arrangement with CSIRO whereby we can pass to them any report on which we would like their assistance, so it would really be only a question of stretching this arrangement slightly to pass them a copy of all reports. However, Dr Duggin's interest is unofficial as far as CSIRO is concerned and this may cause embarrassment.

'These scientists, with all the documents and facilities available to them, are obviously in a position to assist us in this matter, and though I am not keen on releasing the details of the RAAF investigations or anything which may increase the interest of the general public in this field, I think we should give these scientists the information they require'.

The RAAF sanctioned Dr Duggin's research and began assisting, albeit sometimes in a token fashion, the activities of the 'invisible college'.

A SECRET MILITARY RAPID INTERVENTION' TEAM

By 1968 Harry Turner, who had prepared the classified 1954 report on the DAFI UFO reports, was working in the Directorate of Scientific and Technical Intelligence of the Joint Intelligence Bureau. He requested access to DAFI's UFO reports and this was granted. In May 1969 at Turner's suggestion a new RAAF UFO report form was devised which was intended to give a more scientific slant to the reports. At this time Turner was working with other scientists to set up a 'rapid intervention' team to scientifically investigate cases of UFO physical evidence. A firm proposal was developed with the team to operate within the Defence Science and Technical Organisation. The team was to consist of four or five scientists, with its mainstay to be rapid intervention into UFO 'landing' events, for which an aircraft was to be on standby. The plans for the scientific team had been almost completed and authorisation to proceed appeared imminent, when fate intervened.

In the middle of 1969 a major flap broke out in Western Australia, centred in Perth. One of the reports included an impressive radar visual event at Cloverdale and tracked on Kalamunda radar on 23 May. The Director of Air Force Intelligence felt that, with the increasing number of sightings, things had gotten out of control, and made an appeal for the Defence 'intervention' group to assist. Unfortunately the group had not yet been finalised, so Harry Turner was seconded to help out.

Turner supplied me with a copy of his report. The radar visual incident was described as follows: 'On May 23, 1969, Mrs C's thirteen-year-old son, who has an interest in the night sky, noticed from the front door of their house . . . that there was a moving light which he first took to be an aeroplane. As it approached the observer, it became apparent to him that its behaviour pattern differed considerably from that of an aircraft. He called his mother who observed . . . a steady red light on top of a more diffused blue-white light, and darting haphazardly in a zig-zag pattern, but in general travelling towards a northerly direction until it disappeared behind the house. The two witnesses proceeded to

the side of the house where they observed a luminous object stationary against the clear starry sky.

'The light observed was circular—about half the diameter of a full moon. It was steady in position and intensity for some fifteen to twenty minutes. It no longer had a red light on top and had the brightness of a fluorescent street light. The edge was not clean-cut but was somewhat hazy, even though the night air was perfectly clear. The time at which the object was first sighted was estimated as being 1835 hours . . . Shortly before 1900 hours the object moved at extremely high velocity, away from the observers in a general north to north-easterly direction.

'Mrs C telephoned the shift operator on site [at the radar station] . On checking the radar PPI screen, he observed a large echo some nine miles away at three hundred degrees from his position which placed the echo some two and a half miles north of Mrs C's position. Initial contact was made at 1901 hours and held for only thirty to forty seconds. The echo, which reappeared for short durations on five further occasions, was twice the size of a large aircraft at that position. The echo has not been seen since it finally disappeared at 1942 hours.

'One unusual feature of the Kalamunda report is that the radar is equipped with Moving Target Indicator (MTI) which suppresses all permanent echoes and all targets moving at speeds less than an estimated six knots . . . Despite the operation of MTI, the unknown target was clearly visible, even though there was no noticeable displacement of its position. The operator had never before met an apparently stationary target that was recorded so clearly despite the operation of MTI. The operator paid particular attention to this echo over the whole period of forty-one minutes that it occurred, because it was a potential air traffic hazard . . . Just before 1900 hours the object moved away from the observer, disappearing from sight in a fraction of a second, and it is possible that it correlates with the stationary echo on radar at 1901 hours.

'The unusual features of the radar echo are:

(a) size

(b) the fact that it was seen despite the operation of MTI and

(c) the spasmodic appearance.

It is not possible to readily conceive of an explanation for these observations. All observers were obviously sincerely puzzled individuals with an aversion to publicity'.

Turner's report criticised the DAFI system for handling UFO reports, in particular referring to the lack of assistance given to the Air Force Intelligence officer on the spot. The Air Force did not take kindly to criticism, particularly when it came from what DAFI saw as an outsider. The upshot of this was that Harry Turner's access to the DAFI UFO files was withdrawn. Soon after this the plan for the 'rapid intervention' team was dropped, probably because it was at this time that the US Air Force-sponsored Condon Report on UFOs appeared, which concluded there was nothing of scientific worth involved in the subject. Harry Turner wrote at this time that 'the conclusions of the Condon report conflict with its own contents and had been discredited by many reputable scientists including the UFO scientific consultant to the USAF'.

INTRUDER AT WOOMERA

In the wake of Harry Turner's abortive efforts, the scientific investigation of UFOs at an official level all but disappeared, with the primary goal of investigation becoming the resolution of any defence implications of UFO sightings. This attitude can be seen in the Woomera 'intrusions' of late 1971. In one case just prior to the launch of a Black Arrow rocket an unidentified 'aircraft' was observed by a trained meteorological observer over Woomera prohibited airspace. Yet another sighting led to a Department of Supply letter to the Director of Air Force Intelligence, which stated that 'this sighting appears to be sufficiently authenticated, yet there is no official knowledge of any military or civil aircraft that could have intruded into the Woomera air space. It is therefore now a matter of speculation that some foreign aircraft passed through a Restricted Flying Area on December 20, 1971, without the knowledge of the appropriate

authorities, and this is cause for concern'. Air Force intelligence suggested that the UFOs might have been re-entering space debris.

Two days after the first of Woomera 'intrusions', on 30 November 1971, the South Australian division of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (ANZAAS) organised a one-day symposium at the University of Adelaide to consider the UFO problem. The symposium had about 300 attendees. Dr Brian Horton's introduction pointed out that while the UFO question was on the fringe of our current knowledge and indeed was often ridiculed, it should still be scientifically investigated. He cautioned against forming opinions with incomplete information.

1978 AND THE RAAF

The RAAF were not prepared for 1978. For many years it had claimed that 'unexplained' UFO reports were always very low, often less than 3 per cent and never more than 13 per cent as a proportion of all reports, but in 1977 the figure rose to 24 per cent and the next year to 25.4 per cent. It is perhaps not surprising that the Department of Defence ceased publishing the annual summaries after the appearance of Summary No. 9 for the year 1977.

By way of example of sightings in 1978, on 11 April the crew of HMAS *Adroit* operating out of Darwin observed a UFO bearing 285 degrees and appearing to 'rise and hover and sink to the horizon several times before finally disappearing beyond the horizon. This object appeared very large and bathed with bright red lights and at one stage appeared to close on the ship . . . The light also appeared at one stage to flicker on and off. This phenomenon lasted several minutes'. The Royal Australian Naval officer reporting the sighting stated, 'There is no possibility that (this) sighting was the moon setting and I believe it to have been caused by a UFO'. The event is officially listed as 'unknown'.

Following 1978 the RAAF lost interest in UFOs and the public concern about them. It was difficult for researchers to

get any information, with letters either not answered or receiving replies which skirted the substance of the enquiries. While in recent years the RAAF has continued to take a relatively low profile regarding UFOs, civilian researchers have benefited in that reports coming to the RAAF have been passed onto them. Even an abduction case, located near Jindabyne in New South Wales, was referred to my group by the RAAF. I have even had RAAF officers contacting me to report their own UFO sightings.

AN INSIDER REVEALS THE RAAF PARANORMAL EXPERIENCE

It came as a great surprise to many when the RAAF Senior Public Relations Officer in Canberra, Ken Llewellyn, wrote a book called *Flight into the Ages*, about 'incredible true stories of airmen on the earth plane and beyond'. The book, released in February 1992, carried the disclaimer that it did not represent the official view of the RAAF on paranormal activities. It described ghost encounters, past lives, psychic experiences, and most interestingly of all, accounts of UFO experiences. One of Llewellyn's sources was former RAAF pilot Dave Barnes. He gave details of an extraordinary event that took place at Amberley RAAF Base in the late 1970s. More than 20 airmen saw 'a large UFO hovering above the runway', at about 5.00 a.m. The object was described as being an inverted cone shape. Barnes also indicated he had spoken to Aboriginal elders near the Maralinga atomic bomb test site, about their Dreamtime and Min Min lights. The aboriginals had often seen high speed lights north of Maralinga.

Another of Ken Llewellyn's prominent sources was Group Captain Tom Dalton-Morgan. He had been part of a combined Royal Air Force and United States Air Force committee in the late 1940s investigating UFO sightings. It had concluded that most reports could be explained except for 3 per cent. Dalton-Morgan was the Officer in Charge of Range Operations at Woomera between 1959 and 1963. In about the late 1950s, shortly

before the test firing of a Black Night rocket, he received a radio call from Percy Hawkins, the Recovery Officer, reporting an exceptional bright light at about 4,500 metres travelling at high speed directly towards the test site. Dalton-Morgan and his team, who were about 140 kilometres south-east of Hawkin's position, were able to view the incoming light from their elevated control building. They watched it fly in, then orbit around the range buildings some eight kilometres to the south. When the UFO was east of the control building, it seemed to accelerate and climb very steeply away. Dalton-Morgan concluded, 'I am unable to conceive of any object, plane or missile during my posting to Woomera that was able to perform the manoeuvres seen by my team. Observers at the control tower and the launch site all agreed on the brilliant white-greenish light; the high degree of manoeuvrability, including rate and angle of climb; complete lack of sound; the lack of positive identification of the vehicle fuselage because it was a dark moonless night; and the exceptionally high speed of which it was capable'.

In December 1993 the RAAF formerly concluded its relationship with unusual aerial sightings. This swansong was dryly expressed in correspondence to civilian UFO groups around Australia, in which we were informed that 'The number of reports made to the RAAF in the past decade had declined significantly, which may indicate that organisations such as yours are better known and are meeting the community's requirements . . . Consideration of the scientific record suggests that, whilst not all UAS have a ready explanation, there is no compelling reason for the RAAF to continue to devote resources to recording, investigating and attempting to explain unusual aerial sightings (UAS). The RAAF no longer accepts reports on UAS and no longer attempts assignment of cause or allocation of reliability. Members of the community who seek to report a UAS to RAAF personnel will be referred to a civil UFO research organisation in the first instance'.

Given the rich history of political and military machinations that quite often effectively prevented opportunities for real science, the policy statement alluding to 'the scientific record' is particularly perplexing. As a scientist who has examined in de-

tail the RAAF 'record' I can state with some certainty that it was not particularly scientific and was largely defined by two criteria: national security and political expediency.

CHAPTER SEVEN

—1954 to 1958—

The 1954 ‘saucer invasion’ of Victoria began with an intriguing sighting of a flying ‘mushroom’ by an experienced Australian National Airlines pilot, Captain Douglas Barker, on 1 January. He was outside his East Doncaster home at mid-morning. ‘I sighted it first over the Templestowe brickworks . . . on the approach path to Essendon Airport. It was four or five times larger than a large passenger aircraft. The object was transparent and a smoky celluloid colour, with a bit of a tail and a mushroom-shaped head. It oscillated in and out of cloud, and in about six miles changed its course to a north-easterly direction. It was travelling faster than any jet plane that I have ever seen’.

Beneath the queer craft hung what looked like a light amber observation car. ‘Its main body was elliptical with a long shaft about the same length as its body hanging below it. At the end of this thin, slightly curved shaft, was a sort of control tower’.

The Department of Civil Aviation suggested it may have been a Convair aircraft that was in the area. Barker rejected this explanation, ‘I’ve never seen anything less like a Convair. First of all, it was huge—about four times the size of a DC4. It was travelling at about 700 miles per hour, well below the minimum

altitude for the safety of normal aircraft. I see Convairs everyday, but this resembled no aircraft I know'.

Barker had support from colleagues. 'Two or three pilots mentioned similar experiences, not with mushrooms but flying saucers and things. They said they had been too scared to mention what they had seen for fear of ridicule. All my colleagues have taken the reports seriously'.

The Air Force had received a report of another 'flying mushroom', this time at Mansfield, on 15 January. They did not reveal this information, which may have supported Barker's testimony. At 9.30 p.m. two witnesses saw it descending in front of them at 300 metres. Green lights appeared along with a whirring noise 'like wind in wires'. The object was estimated to be 45 metres wide and 18 metres high. A 3.5 metre rim of bright metal was apparent. When it was stationary the green lights went out and the noise grew louder. The duration of the observation was about 20 minutes, during which time its speed varied from fast to hovering. As the object ascended, 'yellow gaseous light' emanated from the base of a 'stem-like' protuberance, giving it a 'mushroom' shape. The whirring stopped. As it moved forward, yellow gaseous light came from the side of the 'stem'.

Numerous reports came in from diverse locations in Victoria, prompting the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) to make a public request for reports to be sent to it. Within a week it had received 59 reports spanning nearly 30 years. DCA officials indicated that they were checking the reports and might turn them over to the air force for more extensive investigation. A spokesman said, 'Some highly qualified engineers in our department are convinced that there is something in the saucer mystery. We just can't ignore reports submitted by reliable witnesses'.

The Air Force made a series of seemingly open statements about UFOs during January 1954. A spokesman was quoted as saying, 'People are definitely seeing something and we hope to find out what it is. The RAAF has an open mind on saucers. We haven't rejected them as impossible or accepted them as fact yet. There is a high-ranking opinion in the Force that saucers do exist and you can't shake it. The RAAF has been receiving saucer reports and investigating them since the war'. The statement

said the RAAF had received hundreds of reports since 1947, and their data indicated:

• 10 per cent of the reports indicated the person making it had definitely seen something;

• details of many of the reports corresponded;

• 75 percent of the reports had come from the country districts;

• the number of reports of sightings from aircraft in flight had increased in recent months; and

• no sightings had been made from an RAAF machine. The aerial observations had all come from civil aircraft.

A high-ranking RAAF officer was quoted as saying, 'The RAAF is keeping an open mind on the objects, but I personally am convinced they have an interplanetary source. People on this earth should be able to fly into outer space within about 40 years—why shouldn't people on other planets already have reached this stage?'

By the end of January 1954 the plague of 'saucer' reports in Victoria had all but disappeared, but sightings started to mount in other states. On 7 January Edgar Jarrold, of the Australian Flying Saucer Bureau, released a press release recalling that record waves of sightings had occurred in 1950 and 1952 during close approaches of Earth and the planet Mars. He predicted that record sightings would occur when the two planets again drew close during 1954. Other researchers were also interested in Mars. During an Australian visit in 1954, French astronomer Dr Gerard de Vaucouleurs was quoted as saying, 'There is something remarkable on Mars. If we could one day conclude there was activity displayed by reasoning minds on Mars, what a prodigious upheaval it would cause in human thought'. Of the Mars research he was conducting at Australia's Mt. Stromlo observatory, de Vaucouleurs said, 'This is not only a learned probe for academic information. It is also a hunt for possible enemies from space'.

But it was a different sort of red peril that predominantly occupied the minds of Australian government agencies in the 1950s. Red menace loomed large during 1954, and McCarthyism

washed across the Australian scene in the wake of the Petrov Affair. The defection of the Russian diplomat on Australian soil led to the withdrawal of the Russian embassy staff on 25 April. Diplomatic ties would not be restored until 1959. While a more pedestrian line of enquiry—the Petrov Royal Commission—tried to ferret out the Communist 'reds', the pressure was also on the intelligence community to determine the source of the 'saucer' reports. Against the backdrop of hostile relations with Russia, the appearance of mystery objects in our skies, violating the security of our airspace, evoked fears within the intelligence world. Only the year before, the CIA had sponsored a secret scientific symposium to evaluate the UFO threat. The possibility of 'flying saucers' being of Russian origin, either as hardware or as a psychological warfare weapon, was being seriously contemplated. The CIA wanted to ensure that at the very least the Russians could not exploit the 'saucer craze' as a screen for a real Soviet attack. Thus officials were concerned when, just three days after the Russian embassy was withdrawn, the UFO 'invasion' of Victoria resumed.

The early morning of 28 April 1954 was beautifully clear. Along the Cressy-Ararat railway line in Victoria, the country is very flat and the views are immense. Engine driver Ted Smith and his fireman Colin Beacon were travelling in the cabin of their Victorian Government goods train, and were nearing Geelong. In the eastern sky, apparently some six kilometres away, a dark purple object was observed diving and banking. Smith later recalled, 'It seemed to stop still for about a minute-and-a-half and then dive at enormous speed. I nearly keeled out of the cabin when I saw the huge round mass plunging down at the train. It screamed down, then suddenly raced up to the sky again'. Pulling out of the dive, the object seemed to bank at the same speed and then hung in the sky as if suspended.

The object was 'just colossal, obscuring the sun here and there by its bulk', and was 'not a clearly round object but somewhat covered in a haze—maybe caused by speed or design. I could see no windows or doors. Trees in the background looked like matchsticks against its bulk. It could have been a quarter of a mile in diameter'.

‘We both saw it stand still in the air. It was frightening the way it just seemed to hang stationary in the air, like a huge monster hovering over us, unlike any possible aircraft . . . It came to within 300 feet of us, and I had a feeling it was being driven. But it must have been by an amateur, the way it careered around the sky . . . We watched for four minutes before it disappeared behind a bank of trees’.

Smith concluded, ‘It was not like anything I had ever seen or read about. It was something out of a dream’.

East Malvern, also in Victoria, was the scene for an intriguing report on 30 May. At about noon, several ‘human-shaped shadows’ were seen in a flying football that passed in a dive over six awed witnesses. The suggestion of human-like figures in the ‘flying football’ caused a media sensation. Among the witnesses was a policeman. He said, ‘Shadows of some people could be seen for several seconds’. Witness David Reese was quoted as saying, ‘When it reached the lowest point, shapes like human figures could definitely be seen. I could distinctly see inside it dark shapes like busts’.

There was an extraordinary close encounter at Dandenong on 5 June 1954 involving two young girls, Janette Brown, 16 years old, and Jeanette Johnston, aged 13. According to Brown: ‘I was standing on Princes Highway, waiting for Jeanette, about 6.20 p.m., when I heard a loud drumming noise, something like a motor cycle, but there were no cars or cycles around at the time. Then a large dark shape appeared over the Heinz factory, and whirred towards me when I shone my torch. Just above the house where the caretaker lives it burst into light. It hovered about 20 yards away on top of the factory gate as if it deliberately wanted me to look at it—or it wanted to look at me. It was cylinder-shaped, about 30 feet long and 15 feet high, with a canopy and window on top and a window at each end’.

She was joined by her friend Jeanette, who recalled that ‘A silvery-coloured cylinder rose above the house, then swept away in a wide circle to the International Harvester factory a few hundred yards away. It stayed on top of the factory for about one minute, then disappeared behind trees’.

There was wild speculation that the saucer's 'cosmic power' had stopped Janette's wristwatch and drained her torch battery of power, and magnetised her handbag, belt clasps and iron fencing over which it had hovered. Neighbours complained that their radio reception was affected. A government geologist, Peter Kenley, visited the site and declared there was no compelling evidence for significant magnetisation. The radio interference was caused by storms, he declared, and he also concurred with the idea that a flock of pigeons had caused the sighting.

Other investigators arrived at different conclusions. Both girls seemed genuinely frightened by the experience, one asking if she could move to another suburb, in case the 'saucer' tried to destroy her home and family. 'This particular sighting has an extremely high probability of being a UFO without any provisos', wrote the author of a classified report for the Air Force. Janette Brown's integrity and conviction 'was impressive', concluded an 'eminent Australian nuclear physicist', who wrote about the Dandenong case in a major article for the Melbourne *Argus*. Entitled '"Saucers" Do Exist and Why!' it appeared on 26 June 1954, indicating that the physicist's name 'must be withheld because of his link with high-level research'. The article concluded: 'the light available and duration of observation were sufficient to discern details of structure that could not possibly be confused with any phenomena other than a machine that is capable of hovering, rotating, and moving in virtual silence without any obvious method of propulsion'. The physicist prepared a report on the affair, from which I quote.

'In shape, the object appeared to have a circular or elliptical base with a domed canopy on top, in which were square windows symmetrically arranged. Underneath the base were three ellipsoidal 'wheels' which appeared to be either swinging or revolving . . .

'The witness had various impressions:

(a) The object was attracted towards her because she flashed a torch at it when it first appeared.

(b) When it was near the fence, she felt that she was being closely observed.

(c) Her torch felt as though it were charged.

(d) She had a 'ghostly feeling' and was afraid. She crouched close to the ground, and was prepared to use the torch as a weapon should something emerge from the object'.

In his *Argus* article, the physicist summarised the 'saucer' mystery as follows.

'From all corners of the world there have come thousands of reports of strange objects in the sky. They have been observed in ones and twos, in small groups, and even by the score, over cities, deserts, mountains and oceans, from distances of less than fifty yards to many miles. Radar plots have checked with visual sightings. Jet fighter aircraft have attempted to intercept them and have been outmanoeuvred. The governments of the US, Britain, Canada and Australia have set up investigation centres. After eliminating all possible alternatives there remain several hundred reports that can't be explained by hallucinations, mass illusion, hoaxes, spots before the eyes, reflection, refraction, stars, meteorites, balloons or sun phenomena . . . An attitude of ridicule has caused many people to refrain from making a report. This is not desirable if we wish to understand these mysterious phenomena . . .

'There seem to be three principal shapes—disc, ellipsoidal (football and cigar), and a shape that could possibly be likened to an inverted saucer with a domed super-structure. In addition, observations have allegedly been made of spherical, pear, doughnut, and spoked-wheel shapes. The material is usually translucent, and may be made luminescent apparently at will. They are often associated with bright white and coloured lights. Exhausts are often orange or yellow-orange, sometimes green or blue, and do not necessarily burn continuously. Usually they are surprisingly silent.

'As observations continue to be made, the general picture should become clearer, and it may be possible to deduce answers to some of the mystifying questions. If some of the reports are true, then these space machines possess properties that are truly fantastic . . .

'Finally, I appeal to the Air Forces and Security Services of the Western World to release their suppressed information . . . If it is wished to have the co-operation of the public, then first co-operate with the public. The more people that know the truth, the more truth will everyone know'.

Apart from this overview of the controversy, as it was perceived at the time, the Australian scientist also presented three hypotheses: 'a certain remnant of reports of UFOs may only be explained by the assumption that machines controlled by some intelligence are being observed'; 'these machines are not manufactured on earth—that is, their origin is extraterrestrial'; and, 'these machines originate from the planet Mars'.

In retrospect, the last of these hypotheses seems decidedly naive. However, for the period such speculation was not totally out of step with the thinking of some members of the scientific community. Recollect that famed astronomer Dr Gerard de Vaucouleurs had only a few months earlier speculated about intelligent life on Mars. The identity of the 'eminent Australian nuclear physicist' remained a mystery until I tracked him down. He was also the author of the secret 1954 report on flying saucers for Air Force Intelligence that has been alluded to previously. The scientist was O. Harry Turner, who at that time was working in the physics department of Melbourne University. He had performed high level research at England's Harwell establishment, at Maralinga (as the chief Australian Health Physics officer during the atomic testing in the late 1950s) and with Australia's military scientific intelligence from the late 1960s.

THE SEA FURY ENCOUNTER

One of the most controversial radar visual reports of the 1950s occurred on 31 August 1954. The story leaked out in December of that year and made front page headlines. Lieutenant J.A. 'Shamus' O'Farrell was returning to Royal Australian Navy Air Station at Nowra, on the south coast of New South Wales, after a night cross-country flight in a Sea Fury aircraft. O'Farrell, who

was experienced at night flights in formation with other aircraft, was flying alone on this occasion and was returning from Yass when he saw a very bright light closing fast at one o'clock. It crossed in front of his aircraft, taking up position to his left. 'I was a bit mesmerised by the light', he recalled. Soon a second light appeared, and took up position to his right. Both lights closed in until they were unnervingly close, about two aircraft lengths away.

At first O'Farrell thought they were other planes. 'If this is a couple of fellers up to play chicken with me this is going to be interesting', he recalled thinking. Then he asked himself, 'Why am I only seeing one light, where are the port and starboard [wing] lights?' He wondered if what he was seeing was the underneath light that comes on when a plane lowers its landing gear, but realised that what he was seeing in each case was a white light situated centrally on top of a large shape 'like the top of a football'. The speeds of the lights, before they slowed down to track O'Farrell's own craft, were the fastest he had ever encountered.

O'Farrell grew nervous at the closeness of the two craft. He was continually turning his head from side to side to keep track of them, and finally wondered if he should call Nowra. The problem was that O'Farrell, like all professional pilots, was reluctant to admit to seeing unexplained lights in the sky—it was not good for his career prospects. 'I said to myself, "If I call Nowra and they say there aren't two aircraft up here I'll be in strife. So think about it"'. He thought about it and decided to call them.

'Nowra, this is 921. Do you have me on radar?'

'Affirmative 921. We have you coming in from the west. We have another two contacts as well'.

At this point O'Farrell recalls being so relieved he said to Nowra, 'I could kiss you!' Then he began to worry about who the other craft might be. He was still convinced they were high performance aircraft. He did a quick 360 degree turn. 'Yes, we've got you', said Nowra. 'You're the centre aircraft'.

'That is correct'.

'Who are the other two aircraft?'

'I don't know. I was hoping you would tell me, because I didn't think there was anyone up here'.

'Well there shouldn't be, and they certainly shouldn't be that close to you'.

O'Farrell had the feeling, which he thinks was caused by movements in the position of the two lights relative to himself, that the occupants of the other craft were listening to his radio conversation with Nowra. Ten minutes after they had first appeared, one of the lights veered in front of O'Farrell at an astonishing speed which made him feel as if he were 'standing still'. (In fact he was flying at 240 knots per hour). Then the two lights shot off and were soon out of sight.

O'Farrell landed at 7.30 p.m. and found a small crowd waiting for him. The Surgeon Commander was among them, and asked O'Farrell if he felt ill. He ran his hand over the pilot's head and said, 'Perhaps you'd like to come to the sick bay after you've changed and we'll do an examination'. Later that night O'Farrell was given a thorough medical examination and enquiries were made to see if he had been drinking earlier that day. He had not. In the end he was given a medical all-clear, and hoped the matter would end there. As he told me: 'I wanted to hush it all up. That sort of investigation made me look a bit of a fool. I was worried it wasn't going to do my career any good'.

But there was an investigation, first by the Air Force and later by the armed services' Joint Intelligence Bureau. More witnesses were found. A man who was working on the non-directional beacon at Narulan saw the lights fly overhead. An air traffic controller at Sydney's Kingsford-Smith Airport also saw the lights approaching him. The Directorate of Naval Intelligence at the time wrote that O'Farrell was 'an entirely credible witness' and that he 'was visibly shaken by his experience, but remains adamant that he saw these objects'.

Sir Arthur Tange, Secretary of the Department of Defence, asked O'Farrell to meet American UFO researcher Dr Allen Hynek on his visit to Australia in 1973. O'Farrell was reluctant to reopen interest in his 1954 experience, in case it affected his career, but he agreed. Tange made the relevant Joint Intelligence Bureau files available to O'Farrell, who was amazed that the bureau had maintained such an extensive dossier on his experience. Hynek told O'Farrell that he could not suggest an

explanation for his sighting, and regarded it as one of the dozen or so most substantial UFO sightings he knew of around the world. O'Farrell told me that Dr John Farrands, Australia's Chief Defence Scientist, had been equally impressed when he reviewed the case. The case stands as one of the most compelling UFO sightings on record in Australia.

THE WOOMERA INCIDENT

Radar at the restricted Woomera rocket range facility in South Australia picked up a UFO on 5 May 1954. At 4.30 p.m. a scientist and a radar operator were talking to another radar operator when the radar confirmed the presence of a UFO. The scientist watched the object with binoculars. One of his functions at Woomera was to monitor rocket tests, and he was sure this was no rocket. The three witnesses saw a 'misty grey disc' which appeared to have a diameter of about three metres. The visual observation, which lasted five minutes, was aided by binoculars. The object travelled south then west, with the radar echo confirming a speed of some 5,800 kilometres per hour. The radar tracked the UFO until it went out of range. At the same time, some tests were being undertaken with a Canberra bomber in flight. The UFO was moving in formation with the Canberra. The Canberra crew could not see the UFO, but both the plane and UFO were confirmed on radar.

THE WAVE OF 1957

On 27 September 1957 the Air Traffic Controller at Launceston Airport, Tasmania, observed a strong white light proceeding at 'DC3 [aircraft] speed' towards Hobart. Hobart was alerted, and half an hour later its radar picked up a strong echo at about 3,000 metres heading towards Hobart. The trace was held for approximately 15 seconds, whereupon the source appeared to accelerate with 'a terrific burst of speed' and disappear.

Air Marshal Sir George Jones, who undertook what appears

to have been the earliest RAAF investigation into UFOs way back in 1930, and was Chief of Air Staff (RAAF) during World War Two, observed a UFO on 16 October 1957. He described it as 'a brilliant white light at the bottom of a shadowy shape like a transparent balloon', which travelled very quickly and silently. Sir George was certain it was not a meteor or reflected light. He told me it was travelling in 'a purposeful way'. He added, 'Nothing could shake me from my belief in what I saw. But I wished I had four or five witnesses. I have reported it, but have been loath to talk of it publicly lest people should think I was either an incompetent witness or getting a little screwy in the head'.

During September and October 1957, nuclear weapon tests, codenamed ANTLER, were undertaken at Maralinga, South Australia, with explosions on 25 September and 9 October. The site was subject to intense security. English and Australian military personnel and civilians were present. Just before dusk one evening, Royal Air Force Corporal Derek Murray and some colleagues were called out of the Maralinga village canteen to witness a UFO hovering silently over the airfield. The UFO was described as a 'magnificent sight', being silver-blue in colour, with a line of 'windows' or 'portholes' along its edge. Murray states that the object was so clear that he could make out what appeared to be plating on the object's surface. The duty air traffic controller also witnessed the spectacle. He reportedly checked Alice Springs and Edinburgh airfields, which reported they did not have anything over their areas. No photographs were taken as the top security status of the area had required that all cameras be locked away. After about 15 minutes, as dusk began to fall, the object left swiftly and silently. Murray later told English UFO researcher Jenny Randles, 'I swear to you as a practising Christian this was no dream, no illusion, no fairy story, but a solid craft of metallic construction'.

On 8 November 1957 astronomers at the Commonwealth Observatory at Mount Stromlo, near Canberra, became reluctant but credible witnesses to the Australian UFO mystery. They observed a bright, pink object moving across the western horizon for about eight minutes before it disappeared. One of the as-

tronomers who saw the UFO towards the end of its appearance, Dr A. Przybylski, said it had a bright pink luminosity which was brighter than anything else in the sky at the time except the moon. It appeared to be brighter than Venus. The object travelled slowly across the horizon, rose and passed beneath the moon before sinking again and eventually disappearing. Dr Przybylski's observation had lasted for about two minutes. He was quoted as saying that the object was completely unlike anything he had hitherto seen. Two of his colleagues also saw the object. A check with aviation authorities indicated that there were no aircraft in the sky at that time. The assistant director of the observatory, Dr A. R. Hogg, indicated 'that it was the first time the observatory had sighted what might be called an unidentified flying object. What it was remains an open question'.

A CLOSE ENCOUNTER AT CASINO

A classic 'car pacing' close encounter occurred on Monday 13 January 1958 on the outskirts of the northern New South Wales town of Casino. The 21 years old witness, Brian Crittenden, a local butchery worker, later described his experience.

'I was leaving my girlfriend's house on Farm Hill at 11.45 p.m. . . . As I closed the fence gate on the way home, I saw a dome-shaped light with a long narrow light underneath which was bright and glowing. It came over the hill from the east and straight towards me. I was so shocked that I ignored a half-flat tyre and jumped into the car and sped towards home.

'The strange object followed me three miles on Benns Road. It appeared to be about 50 yards away and 30 feet high, practically touching the telegraph poles. Its size was about that of a sedan car. The object chased my car, overtook it though I was travelling at 65 to 70 mph in my panic, hovered for a few seconds and then swooped low over the roof of my car. It kept repeating its actions until I reached town, seven miles from my girlfriend's home.

'I can't say whether the object was noiseless or not because

the noise from my engine was so loud, but it is a notable fact that my car radio developed interference as the object was approaching.

'The car windows were down. I don't wear eye-glasses and I'd had no alcoholic drink that night. The weather was cloudy. Needless to say I was terribly shocked after this unusual experience, and arrived home trembling. My relatives and friends believe my story, but others treat it as a joke'.

The total duration of the encounter was almost fifteen minutes when the object disappeared in the city lights of Casino. Civil Aviation Traffic Control indicated there were no low-flying aircraft in the area at the time.

CHAPTER EIGHT

—1959—

In the 1950s many people claimed to have met aliens, particularly from Mars or Venus. The most prominent figure in the 'contactee' world in the late 1950s was without doubt George Adamski. His tales of meeting Venusians, Martians and Saturnians turned Adamski into an international celebrity. He was revered by followers and reviled by his critics. Some of his most prominent critics came from the ranks of serious UFO researchers who were seeking to legitimise the study of UFOs. Unfortunately for them, Adamski and other contactees were a great help to those seeking to ridicule the whole field.

Adamski's followers were legion, many emerging from fringe occult movements, or alienated saucer enthusiasts seeking a focus in their lives. Largely due to this level of interest, Adamski embarked on a world tour. After America he came to New Zealand and Australia in 1959. The popularity of Adamski's first book had led Fred and Phyllis Dickeson of Timaru on the South Island of New Zealand to form the Australiasian Adamski Flying Saucer Group in late 1954. The Dickesons circulated Adamski tapes and other material. Adamski's visit to New Zealand, while a sellout, produced mixed reactions. Many found his films and

photographs of flying saucers unconvincing. His lectures on Venusian life appealed largely to the converted, but the benevolent nature of his 'space brothers' struck a more popular chord. Brotherly Venusians, presumably, appealed more than martial Martians.

Adamski's visit to Australia drew a more sceptical response. Australia had the advantage of being a large country with great distances separating the principle areas of population. Strong and independent UFO groups had developed in each state. While there was interest in Adamski, many of the main groups were already realising the damage being caused by his dubious claims. His visit attracted wide debate and ridicule, and reportedly there were efforts to stop him showing his photographic material. The Queensland Flying Saucer Research Bureau was one of the few to maintain an ongoing affection for Adamski and the contactee credo.

Airline pilot Bruce Cathie became New Zealand's most prolific and widely read author on UFO matters. He had a number of sightings himself, the most interesting being an underwater one in 1965. This occurred on a flight over Kaipara Harbour, when he saw an object which at first resembled a 'stranded grey-white whale' in about 10 metres of water. As he flew closer he saw it was actually a streamlined, metallic object about 30 metres long. Following research into other local sightings, Cathie developed a complex UFO 'power grid' theory, that he extended to a global grid. Soon he was linking his grid to all manner of things including earthquakes, volcanos, ancient monuments and atomic bomb explosions. Looking at the idea that UFOs might fly in straight lines was not new. French ufologist Aimé Michel had developed a similar hypothesis in his 1958 book *Flying Saucers and the Straight Line Mystery*, but subsequent research revealed his alignments to be explainable by chance. Today Cathie's theories are taken seriously only by a minority of true believers.

THE BOIANAI VISITANTS OF 1959

In 1959 Papua New Guinea was still a territory of Australia. June of that year saw the spectacular sightings by Father William Gill, an Australian Anglican missionary, and 37 members of his Boianai mission. Gill made notes about the experience, which the media obtained. Stories appeared in August, causing a sensation. I have had two extended interviews with Reverend Gill and was impressed with his quiet and certain manner in relating the events. What follows comes from his own account of the affair.

Only the day before the sighting, Gill had composed a letter to the Reverend David Durie, Acting Principal of Saint Aidan's College at Dogura, to accompany a report regarding a UFO sighting made by Stephen Moi, an assistant teacher at Gill's mission.

'Dear David,

Have a look at this extraordinary data. I am almost convinced about the "visitation" theory. There have been quite a number of reports over the months, from reliable witnesses. The peculiar thing about these most recent reports is that the UFOs seem to be stationary at Boianai or to travel from Boianai. The Mount Pudi vicinity seems to be the hovering area. I myself saw a stationary white light twice on the same night on 9 April, but in a different place each time. I believe your students have also sighted one over Boianai. The Assistant District Officer, Bob Smith and Mr Glover have all seen it, or similar ones on different occasions—again, over Boianai, although I think the Baniara people said they watched it travel across the sky from our direction. I should think that this is the first time that the "saucer" has been identified as such.

'I do not doubt the existence of these "things" (indeed I cannot, now that I have seen one for myself) but my simple mind still requires scientific evidence before I can accept the from-outer-space theory. I am inclined to believe that probably many UFOs are more likely some form of electric phenomena—or perhaps something brought about by the atom bomb explosions, etc. That Stephen should actually make out a saucer could be the

work of the unconscious mind as it is very likely that at some time he has seen illustrations of some kind in a magazine, or it is very possible that saucers do exist, but it is only a 50/50 chance that they are not earth made, still less that they should carry men (more likely radio controlled), and it is still unproven that they are solids.

'It is all too difficult to understand for me; I prefer to wait for some bright boy to catch one to be exhibited in Martin Square.

'Please return this report as I have no copy and I want Nor. (Rev. Norman Crutwell) to have it.

Yours,
Doubting William

Anglican Mission,
Boianai.
27/6/59'

The events of the next day converted the Doubting William, as the next letter graphically indicates.

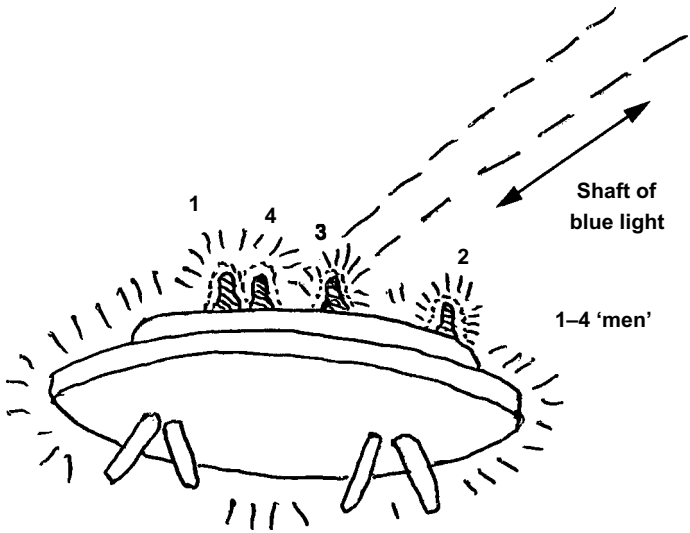
'Dear David,

Life is strange, isn't it? Yesterday I wrote you a letter, (which I still intend sending you) expressing opinions re the UFOs. Now, less than twenty-four hours later I have changed my views somewhat. Last night we at Boianai experienced about four hours of UFO activity, and there is no doubt whatsoever that they are handled by beings of some kind. At times it was absolutely breath-taking. Here is the report. Please pass it round, but great care must be taken as I have no other, and this, like the one I made out re. Stephen, will be sent to Nor. I would appreciate it if you could send the lot back as soon as poss.

Cheers,
Convinced Bill'

As indicated by his notes, Gill saw a bright white light in the north western sky. It appeared to be approaching the mission and hovering about 100 metres up. Eventually 38 people, in-

cluding Gill, teachers Steven Gill Moi and Ananias Rarata, and Mrs Nessie Moi, gathered to watch the main UFO, which looked like a large, disc-shaped object. It was apparently solid and circular with a wide base and narrower upper deck. The object appeared to have four 'legs' underneath it. There also appeared to be about four 'panels' or 'portholes' on the side of the object, which seemed to glow a little brighter than the rest. At a number of intervals the object produced a shaft of blue light which shone upwards into the sky at an angle of about 45 degrees.



Drawing of the Boianai craft as seen by 38 people

What looked like 'men' came out of the object, onto what seemed to be a deck on top of it. There were four men in all, occasionally two, then one, then three, then four. The shaft of blue light and the 'men' disappeared. The object then moved through some clouds. There were other UFO sightings during the night. Gill described the weather as variable sky—scattered

clouds to clear at first, becoming overcast after. He estimated the height of the clouds at about 600 metres. The first sighting over the sea, according to Rev. Gill, seemed to be about 150 metres above the water at times. The main UFO was clearly visible and seemed mostly stationary during the twenty-five minutes of observation.

Astonishingly, the aerial visitor put in a repeat performance the following night, 27 June. Gill prepared another statement.

'Large UFO first sighted by Annie Laurie at 6 p.m. in apparently same position as last night (26/6/59) only seemed a little smaller, when W.B.G. saw it at 6.02 p.m. I called Ananias and several others and we stood in the open to watch it. Although the sun had set it was still quite light for the following fifteen minutes. We watched figures appear on top—four of them—no doubt that they are human. Possibly the same object that I took to be the "Mother" ship last night. Two smaller UFOs were seen at the same time, stationary. One above the hills west, another overhead. On the large one two of the figures seemed to be doing something near the centre of the deck—were occasionally bending over and raising their arms as though adjusting or "setting up" something (not visible). One figure seemed to be standing looking down at us (a group of about a dozen). I stretched my arm above my head and waved. To our surprise the figure did the same. Ananias waved both arms over his head then the two outside figures did the same. Ananias and self began waving our arms and all four now seemed to wave back. There seemed to be no doubt that our movements were answered. All mission boys made audible gasps (of either joy or surprise, perhaps both).

'As dark was beginning to close in, I sent Eric Kodawara for a torch and directed a series of long dashes towards the UFO. After a minute or two of this, the UFO apparently acknowledged by making several wavering motions back and forth. Waving by us was repeated and this followed by more flashes of torch, then the UFO began slowly to become bigger, apparently coming in our direction. It ceased after perhaps half a minute and came no further. After a further two or three minutes the figures apparently lost interest in us for they disappeared "below" deck. At

6.25 p.m. two figures re-appeared to carry on with whatever they were doing before the interruption. The blue spotlight came on for a few seconds twice in succession'.

Gill has described how he and the mission people called out to the men, even shouting at them, and beckoned them to descend, but there was no response beyond what has already been noted. Two smaller UFOs higher up remained stationary. By 6.30 p.m. the scene had remained largely unchanged, and Gill records that he went to dinner. Subsequently critics were to question this—why would someone walk away from such an extraordinary sight? 'I'm always asked this question', Gill has said, 'either in puzzlement or with a sneer. Having had about four hours of this sight on Friday night, we were not nearly so interested when it returned on Saturday night, especially after we were unable to persuade it to land. You must also keep in mind that there was nothing eerie or other-worldly about any of this. It was all so ordinary, as ordinary as a Ford car. It looked a perfectly normal sort of object, an earth-made object. I realised, of course, that some people might think of this as a flying saucer but I took it to be some kind of hovercraft the Americans or even the Australians had built. The figures inside looked perfectly human. In fact, I thought they were human, that if we got them to land we would find the pilots to be ordinary earthmen in military uniforms and we would have dinner with them'.

At 7.00 p.m. the 'No. 1 UFO' was still present, although it appeared somewhat smaller. The group of observers went to church for evensong. After evensong, visibility was very limited with the sky covered in cloud. Nothing else was seen that evening. At 10.40 p.m., a very penetrating, 'ear-splitting' explosion woke up people on the station. It sounded like it had come from just outside the window of the mission house. Gill felt it did not sound like a thunderclap. Nothing had been seen, but the whole sky was overcast. Other less compelling activity occurred the following night. Then it seemed the Boianai visitants had gone. But the controversy had just begun.

Reverend Gill was at the time of his sightings already scheduled to return to Australia. This presented civilian groups with

an excellent opportunity to assess the credibility of the reports. All investigators found Gill to be very impressive. This led one of the leading civilian groups, the Victorian Flying Saucer Research Society, to view the Gill reports as constituting the most remarkable testimony of intensive UFO activity ever reported to civilian investigators. They were unique because for the first time credible witnesses had reported the presence of humanoid beings associated with UFOs. The major civilian groups of the day, in a spirit of new-found cooperation inspired by the significance of the Boianai observations, distributed copies of Gill's sighting report to all members of the House of Representatives of Australia's federal parliament. A letter accompanied the report, signed by the presidents of the participating civilian UFO groups, urging members of parliament to press the Minister for Air for a statement about the attitude Air Force Intelligence had to the New Guinea reports.

On 24 November 1959 in federal parliament E.D. Cash, a Liberal member from Western Australia, asked the Minister for Air, F.M. Osborne, whether his department (specifically Air Force Intelligence) had investigated the reports. The minister's reply did not address this question, but instead focused on the general situation, indicating that most sightings of UFOs were explained and 'that only a very small percentage—something like 3 per cent—of reported sightings of flying objects cannot be explained'. A representative of one UFO group was advised by the Directorate of Air Force Intelligence that the Department was awaiting 'depth of evidence' on the New Guinea sightings. However, the department had not even interviewed Gill. Finally the Minister for Defence requested a report and the RAAF interviewed Gill on 29 December 1959, some six months after the sighting. Gill's recollection of the visit is that the two officers from Canberra talked about stars and planets and then left. He heard no more from them.

As one might expect, Gill's account was dismissed by the RAAF despite its extraordinary nature and the number of witnesses. The senior interviewing officer, Squadron Leader F.A. Lang, concluded:

'Although the Reverend Gill could be regarded as a reliable observer, it is felt that the June/July incidents could have been nothing more than natural phenomena coloured by past events and subconscious influences of UFO enthusiasts. During the period of the report the weather was cloudy and unsettled with light thunder storm. Although it is not possible to draw firm conclusions, an analysis of rough bearings and angles above the horizon does suggest that at least some of the lights observed were the planets Jupiter, Saturn and Mars. Light refraction, the changing position of the planet relative to the observer and cloud movement would give the impression of size and rapid movement. In addition varying cloud densities could account for the human shapes and their sudden appearance and disappearance'.

My own close analysis of the reports suggests that the RAAF 'explanation' of 'either known planets seen through fast moving cloud, or natural phenomena' does not bear up.

Over the years there have been a number of 'explanations' put forward to account for the Boianai sightings, including astronomical misidentification, hoax, cargo cult effects, and that Gill had myopia and astigmatism. (In fact at the time he was wearing correctly prescribed glasses). None of these satisfactorily address the evidence. Dr Allen Hynek, and staff at his Center for UFO Studies, went to great lengths to investigate and research the affair. Hynek and Allen Hendry, the the centre's chief investigator, concluded the 'lesser UFOs' seen by Gill were attributable to bright stars and planets, but not the primary object. Its size and absence of movement over three hours ruled out an astronomical explanation. My own discussions with Gill led me to the same conclusion.

Most recently there was an attempt at explaining the whole affair away by suggesting that Gill and the other witnesses were confused by a false horizon, and that all they had been watching was a brightly lit squid-boat and crew too busy to do more than just wave at the people on shore. This idea is not tenable when one realises that Gill was certain that the object he saw was at a 30 degree elevation in the sky. A more radical attempt to dispose of the Gill case came from UFO sceptic

Daniel Cohen in his book *Myths of the Space Age.*

The Boianai visitations are enshrined in a classic piece of Australian fiction. Novelist Randolph Stow's 1979 book *Visitants,* which has the Boianai visitations as a backdrop to a striking story of confrontation and disintegration, emerged from Stow's experience as a cadet patrol-officer in Papua-New Guinea. He was an assistant to the Government Anthropologist. His novel opens with this sentence: 'On 26 June 1959, at Boianai in Papua, visitants appeared to the Reverend William Booth Gill, himself a visitant of thirteen years standing, and to thirty-seven witnesses of another colour'.

The Boianai 'visitants' still stand as remarkable evidence for an impressive aerial anomaly and are regarded as some of the best entity reports on record. At the time of writing I spoke again with Gill. He still remains puzzled by what he saw and was pleased that an authority like Dr Hynek had independently interviewed him and some of the other witnesses and travelled to the site. While he accepts that the sightings remain unexplained, he questioned my characterisation of some attempts to explain them as 'silly'. He felt that these 'explanations' were serious attempts to bring understanding to the events. I think that attitude encapsulate the integrity of Gill and the reality of the affair.

In 1973 Allen Hynek visited Australia and Papua New Guinea and found six of the witnesses to the Boianai events. They all supported Gill's version of what had happened.

VISITANTS AT BLENHEIM

Papua was not the only place to experience striking manifestations of 'visitants' in 1959. On 13 July, on a property near Blenheim, in New Zealand, Eileen Moreland was just starting to round up her cow herd by torchlight for milking. Halfway across the paddock she noticed that the area had become bathed in an usual green glow. She looked up to find the source, whereupon she observed two green lights, 'like eyes', appear through the thick layer of cloud. The lights were circled by a band of orange lights. She fled to the shelter of a line of pine trees bordering the

property, from where she was able to clearly see a flatfish, cylindrical object slowly descending from about 50 metres. It stopped some 10 metres above the ground, some 40 metres out in the centre of the paddock. The object appeared to be about two-and-a-half metres high and some seven metres in diameter. It had two rows of orange-green 'jets' set into bands at the top and bottom of the main body of the object. When the object stopped and began to hover steadily, the jets shut off and reappeared at a slight angle. These began to rotate at high speed, to a point that the bands of lights resembled 'halos'. A loud humming noise was heard.

Moreland was disturbed when she saw that the strange aerial object appeared to be occupied. Inside a clear, dome-like structure on top, she could see two seated figures. They appeared to be dressed in almost skin-tight metallic suits with large silver helmets. One of the 'men' suddenly stood up and leaned forward on his hands. He appeared to be observing something between himself and the other figure. The 'man' seemed to be a little over one-and-a-half metres in height. No facial detail could be made out, as he was not facing in her direction and the large helmet covered his head from shoulder to shoulder. This 'man' then sank back to his former position. The object tilted slightly and began to rise vertically. It disappeared at high speed into the cloud cover. A high pitched whine—an 'unbearable' screech—accompanied the UFO's departure. Within a moment a wave of warm air reached Moreland, along with a 'strange hot pepper smell of ozone'.

Moreland's husband was an Air Force officer. He encouraged her to report the experience. Royal New Zealand Air Force officers visited the area and detected residual radiation where the UFO had been. Moreland underwent audio tone readings supervised by Air Force personnel, which estimated the noise levels of the object at 15,000 cycles (hovering noise) and 150,000 cycles (high pitched screaming, climbing noise). Several days after the encounter, Moreland's hands began to swell and get puffy. Her wedding ring became painfully tight and had to be cut off. The swelling gradually subsided. Brown pigmented areas developed on her face. These persisted for some time and the last

blotch, over her right eyebrow, washed off only six years later. A row of fruit trees that was situated beneath the position of the hovering object died, and had to be pulled out. Grass in the area grew at a much faster rate than usual, to a greater height and much greener colour than the surrounding grass.

BURREN JUNCTION CLOSE ENCOUNTER

Police in country New South Wales also witnessed unearthly apparitions during this period. A police constable operating out of the Burren Junction station sent the following account to the RAAF: 'On the night of 7 July 1959 at 9.20 p.m. I was patrolling the stock route about twelve miles due south-south-east from Burren Junction in my car. I saw a bright red light in the sky and stopped my car on the side of the road, alighted and observed that the bright red light was some kind of object. It was reddish on top and from the bottom shone a very bright, blood red light. This came out in a cone shape from the bottom and thinning out in the middle of the cone. It hovered over the trees, backward and forward, and sideways. It did not appear to be very high in the sky and I fully expected the object or light to pass over my vehicle at any moment . . . It appeared to go away slowly. I could see it for some distance going away.

'At the time I thought it was so strange that nobody would believe me if I told them about it. I later went to inspect stock about three miles further on down the road (after I had kept this object under observations for at least ten to fifteen minutes). I mentioned the subject to a Mr B, who was in charge of the stock, and with two young lads who were droving with him, he told me that he saw a strange object near the roadway on the stock route. He said that at about 7 a.m. that morning he asked the boys what the big grey cattle float was doing on the side of the road. He didn't think any more about it, but later the two boys rode their horses within several hundred yards of what they thought was a float and stated that they saw a large grey thing which looked like a triangle on the bottom with a dome on top. They stood watching for several minutes and then became almost fright-

ened, when suddenly the dome disappeared and then the bottom as if by magic'.

A DEADLY CONFRONTATION NEAR COOKTOWN

Three men, whom I have called Bob, 'Yo Yo', and Brian, experienced a rather more ominous encounter on the outskirts of Cooktown, Queensland, on 17 May 1959. They were crocodile hunting by boat in a swamp area. By 4.30 a.m. they had shot three or four crocs, when their attention was attracted by a piercing, humming noise. A huge circular object suddenly came into view. It hovered at about tree top level some 100 metres away. The object, maybe 50 metres across, appeared to be football-shaped, with a band of half-moon-shaped windows. It was issuing some sort of vapour. The sighting lasted some 20 minutes, during which time the men mostly lay hidden in long grass. Brian and Yo Yo stood up during the sighting. The UFO eventually moved in a semi-circle, then rose slowly and disappeared at high speed. All three men discussed the extraordinary event, but agreed not to talk to anybody about it.

Bob alleges all manner of severe physical effects as a consequence of this experience. He alleges that Brian died shortly after the sighting. He feels it was due to fact that Brian stood up during the incident. He does not know what happened to Yo Yo. Bob alleges the encounter led to loss of the use of his legs, severe headaches, sporadic loss of vision, and speech deterioration beyond an pre-existing speech impediment problem. He has had extensive hospitalisation and has been institutionalised, all of which he links directly and indirectly to his experience in 1959. I interviewed Bob during 1976. He was still suffering from a severe speech impediment, however the UFO event and post-event history was told with some lucidity, albeit with difficulty. Whether the post-event traumas were in anyway connected with the 1959 incident, it is now impossible to determine.

CHAPTER NINE

—the 1960s—

The 1960s and the 1970s were periods steeped in UFO accounts of great strangeness. They emerged at a time when each was investigated with gradually increasing effectiveness. Considerable intrigue and energetic debate marked the search for answers from both the perspective of the civilian researcher and that of the clandestine world of official investigations. Occasionally such activities came together in curious ways but generally official investigations remained the stuff of secrecy, at least to the general public. Civilian researchers themselves were caught up in fundamental and evolutionary steps towards understanding the nature and extent of the UFO phenomenon.

THE CRESSY AFFAIR

The Cressy area of Tasmania became the centre of a spectacular wave of sightings in October and November 1960. Once again,

an Anglican priest reported that he had seen a UFO. The Reverend Lionel Browning and his wife witnessed a fantastic sight from the dining room of the Cressy Anglican rectory on 4 October, and a detailed account appeared in the Launceston *Mercury* of 10 October. A succession of media stories followed, elevating the sighting to national prominence. Again, because of the credibility of the witness, the RAAF were in a difficult position in their efforts to contain the rapidly escalating public clamour.

Wing Commander G.L. Waller interviewed the Brownings on 11 November and concluded that they were 'stable, responsible and unexcitable individuals who would not perpetrate a hoax', and were 'genuinely and firmly convinced that they saw actual objects'. Waller's report was in part based on Browning's written statement of events.

'He and his wife were standing in the dining room looking out through the window at a rainbow over some low hills approximately eight miles to the east. The hills, the highest of which are approximately 800 feet, were partly obscured by low cloud and rain. [His] wife drew his attention to a long cigar-shaped object which was emerging from a rain squall.

'The object was a dull-greyish colour, had four or five vertical dark bands around its circumference . . . and had what looked like a short aerial array which projected outwards and upward from the object. The object seemed to be slightly longer than Viscount aircraft which Mr Browning frequently sees flying in that area and he therefore estimated the object's length as about one hundred feet. The outline of the object was well defined and was even more so a little later when it had as a backdrop the tree covered slopes of a rain free area of the hills . . .

'After emerging from the rain squall the object moved on an even keel at an estimated speed of sixty to seventy miles per hour and at a constant height of approximately four hundred feet. [It] moved approximately one and a half miles north . . . and then abruptly stopped. Within seconds it was joined by five or six small saucer-like objects which had emerged at high speed from the low cloud above and behind. [They] stationed themselves at positions around the cigar-shaped object at a radius of one half

of a mile and then, after an interval of several seconds, the cigar-shaped object, accompanied by the smaller objects, abruptly reversed back towards and then into the rain squall from which it had emerged . . . In all, the cigar-shaped object had been visible for approximately one minute'.

The Brownings watched the area for several more minutes but the objects did not reappear. Another person in Cressy, a Mrs D. Bransden, also witnessed the spectacle, describing it as like 'a lot of little ships flocking around a bigger one'.

In a minute dated 14 November 1960 the Director of DAFI reported to the federal Minister of Air that 'a preliminary analysis of the available information indicates that this sighting was some form of natural phenomena associated with the unsettled weather conditions'. Wing Commander Waller, in a letter to meteorologist Dr James McDonald, indicated that the couple 'impressed me as being mature, stable, and mentally alert individuals, who had no cause or desire to see objects in the sky other than objects of definite form and substance'. Such comments by the RAAF investigating officer are difficult to reconcile with the Air Force Intelligence statement released a few days after Wing Commander Waller's interviews. It dismissed the observation as 'a phenomenon [caused by] a moon rise associated with meteorological conditions at the time'. The intelligence report further stated, 'The presence of scud type clouds, moving in varying directions due to turbulence in and around a rain squall near where the objects were sighted, and the position of the moon or its reflections, produced the impression of flying objects'.

Reverend Browning indicated that at no time during the 90 minute Air Force interview was he asked about clouds: 'At no time was there cloud or scud when I saw the objects. The mountain was not the backdrop to what I saw. The rain cleared in front of us although it was still raining near the mountains. I saw the objects in the sky where there was no rain and the rain near the mountains provided the backdrop'. Dr McDonald, an acknowledged international expert in meteorology and atmospheric physics, concluded that 'the official suggestion . . . seems entirely out of the question'.

The RAAF's attempts to explain the Cressy sighting away were rather hollow, particularly given an intriguing sighting report I found buried in the DAFI UFO files. On 15 November 1960, some 50 kilometres north of Cressy, a United States Air Force JB57 aircraft, operating out of East Sale RAAF base, encountered a UFO. The USAF pilot's report in the RAAF UFO files stated: 'Approximately 1040 LCL while flying on a mission track 15 miles north of Launceston. My navigator called out an aircraft approaching to our left and slightly lower. I spotted the object and immediately commented to [the navigator] that it was not an aircraft, but looked more like a balloon. We judged its altitude to be approximately 35,000 feet, heading 140 degrees and its speed extremely high. From a previous experience I would say its closing rate would have been in excess of 800 knots. We observed this object for five or seven seconds before it disappeared under the left wing.

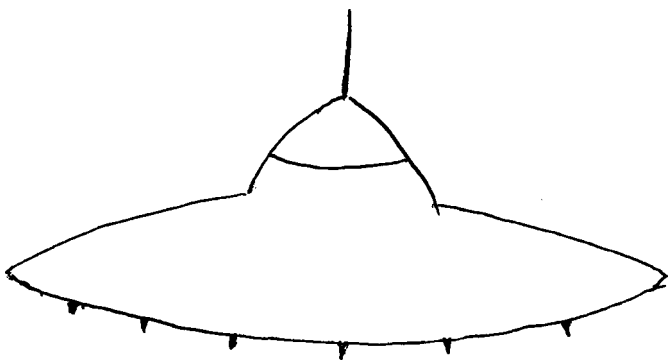
'Since it was unusual in appearance, I immediately banked to the left for another look, but neither of us could locate it. The colour of the object was nearly translucent somewhat like that of a 'poached egg'. There were no sharp edges but rather fuzzy and undefined. The size was approximately 70 feet in diameter and it did not appear to have any depth'.

THE WILLOW GROVE ENCOUNTER

At 7 a.m. on 15 February 1963 Charles Brew bore witness to a classic close encounter. With his 20 year-old son, Trevor, Brew was at work in the milking shed on their farm, 'Willow Grove', near Moe, Victoria. It was light, but rain clouds lay overhead. Charles Brew was standing in an open area, with a full view of the eastern sky. It was from that direction that he saw a strange object appear and descend very slowly towards the milk shed. The object's approach was coincident with the cattle and a pony reacting violently. The two farm dogs fled. A local newspaper even reported that the cows turned somersaults, a suggestion the Brews later denied.

The UFO descended to a height of about 30 metres, hovering

over a large stringy-bark tree. It was about eight metres in diameter and three metres high. The top section appeared to be a transparent dome of a glass-like material, from which protruded a two metre high mast or aerial. The 'aerial' appeared to be as thick as a broom and resembled bright chrome. The top portion of the disc itself was battleship grey in colour and appeared to be of a metallic lustre. The base or underside section glowed with a pale blue colour and had 'scoop-like protuberances around the outside edge'. This section rotated slowly at about one revolution per second. This spinning motion apparently caused the protuberances to generate a swishing noise, somewhat like a turbine noise, that was clearly audible not only to Brew but also to his son Trevor, who was located inside the shed near the operating diesel-powered milking machine units.



The Willow Grove UFO based on witness sketch in RAAF files

Charles Brew felt his eyes were drawn towards the object 'as though beams of magnetic current' were between it and him. He also experienced a peculiar headache which came on with the approach of the object. After hovering for a few seconds the object began to climb, continuing on its westward course and passing up into the cloud deck again. Trevor did not see the UFO, but confirmed the unusual sound, like a didgeridoo or bull-

roarer—aboriginal artefacts which can produce pulsating, wind-rushing noise.

Flight Lieutenant N. Hudson and Squadron Leader A.F. Javes of the RAAF interviewed Brew. While impressed with his credibility, the weather at the time of the sighting—heavy continuous rain with very low cloud and poor visibility, and with a fresh wind in an easterly direction—seems to have led them to focus on weather-related explanations. Their report describes the basis of their somewhat extraordinary 'explanation' for the incident: 'On 6 March Dr Berson and Mr Clark, Commonwealth meteorologists, were interviewed to see if clouds give this type of phenomenon. They agreed that a tornado condition could give this effect. The direction of rotation of Brew's report of the object was consistent with known facts for the Southern Hemisphere. The blue-ish colouring has been reported previously and is probably due to electric discharge and there would be a smell of ozone. The only difference in Brew's report was that the object moved from east to west, because all their previous reports of this nature have been from west to east. Mr Brew stated that the wind was fresh from an easterly direction. However, a meteorological report states that wind was westerly at eight knots'.

The report notes that the meteorological report was from a Yallourn observer, about 20 kilometres away, therefore local variations in the weather would not have been unusual. Despite this lack of rigour in determining how relevant their hypothesis was, the RAAF officers' report concluded, 'There is little doubt that Brew did witness something, and it is most likely that it was a natural phenomenon. The phenomenon was probably a tornado. There was no reported damage along its path, therefore one could assume that it was weak in nature'.

The Department of Air responded to a civilian UFO group enquiry about the incident with the following statement, 'Our investigation and enquiries reveal that there are scientific records of certain tornado-like meteorological manifestations which have a similar appearance in many ways to whatever was seen by Mr Brew. The information available is such, however, that while we accept this is a possibility, we are unable to come to any firm

conclusion as to the nature of the object or manifestation reported'. The official sighting summaries removed any such doubt. By then the 'possible cause' was listed as a 'tornado-like meteorological manifestation'.

Dr Berson and an associate visited Brew at the Willow Grove property. According to Brew, Dr Berson was interested in the headache that he had, and indicated that Berson had said that it tied in with his theory of a possible electromagnetic nature of the incident. What the Department of Air referred to as a 'tornado-like meteorological manifestation' elicited the following comment from Charles Brew. He said, 'I wished it would come again. It was beautiful. I could feel the life pulsating from it'.

The sighting was listed in a subsequently released 'Summary of Unidentified Aerial Sightings reported to Department of Air, Canberra, ACT, from I960' as having a possible cause of 'tornado-like meteorological manifestation'.

UNDERWATER, NEAR GROOTE EYLANDT

It is unusual for a sighting to be reported as located in water. The Air Force files hold a report of the unusual sighting made by the crew of the landing craft *Loellen M* in 1964. The incident was located between Cape Grey and Groote Eylandt, a large island on the western side of the Gulf of Carpentaria, Northern Territory. The report mentions that the vessel encountered a number of submarine 'light patches': 'C. W. turned on the compass light and found the vessel approx 60 degrees off course. The compass went haywire'. As soon as he had corrected the vessel as best he could, he switched off the compass light and found the unnatural light was about two metres on the starboard side. The light was in the water. It was described as a ghostly white light, and in the centre was a shadow which rotated in a clockwise direction causing the light to pulsate. The light appeared to draw away to the stern. It is estimated that it was miles across and a few hundred yards through.

All lights were the same colour, with this strange rotating shadow, causing the lights to pulsate. The compass swung out of

control, but became worse as the light approached. This is a fascinating report, although its origins might lie in some form of extraordinary bioluminescence.

THE BOUGAINVILLE REEF INCIDENT

In the early hours of 28 May 1965 a DC6 aircraft flying out over Bougainville Reef contacted Townsville ground control, indicating that it was being 'buzzed' by a UFO. The aircraft crew described the UFO as round and flattened, with exhaust gases being observed. The object paced the aircraft for 10 to 15 minutes. The pilot took photographs and had the crew confirm the encounter. Upon landing at Port Moresby, the pilot was told not to have the film processed in New Guinea, but instead to return with it to Australia. He was met in Brisbane and flown to Canberra, were it was alleged the film was confiscated. It was further alleged that the chief of DCA travelled to Townsville and confiscated the 12 hour DCA control tower tapes, which held the conversation between the Tower air traffic controller and the pilot. Dr Allen Hynek quotes the pilot in his book, *The UFO Experience*, 'I had always scoffed at these reports but I saw it. We all saw it. It was under intelligent control, and it was certainly no known aircraft'.

The pilot has been identified as Captain John Barker and the duty officer at Townsville control was William Orr. Orr passed on details of the incident to John Meskell, a detective with the Criminal Investigation Branch. Investigations were undertaken but the case could not be absolutely confirmed. Indeed the RAAF and the DCA indicated that they had no details of the affair. The. RAAF files I examined do not contain any reference to the incident. The DCA UFO files I examined revealed internal memoranda about the affair, which implied no inside knowledge of the affair or any awareness of the incident by the federal and state directors of DCA.

Up until 1965 'physical trace' cases involving apparent UFO landing events were a rare phenomenon in Australia. Whether they were occurring with the frequency apparent from 1965

onwards is not known. In any case the first really compelling 'physical trace' did not occur until 1965. Anecdotal evidence exists for earlier events but it is not as reliable as the information amassed on the events of 1965 and 1966.

THE THING ON THE BEACH

Another striking case occurred near Vaucluse, one of Sydney's beach suburbs, at about 5.30 p.m. on 19 July 1965. Between showers and high winds, Dennis Crowe, a former technical artist with English aircraft companies, was walking along the beach, near his home. He became aware of a glow coming from a huge disc-shaped object resting on leg-like structures. The object's diameter was estimated at some six metres. It had a glowing, greenish-blue rim, while the top and bottom halves were dull, silver-grey in appearance. Crowe thought a hollow in the top could have been a glass dome. He could not make out any sign of movement in the object. When he approached the object to within about 20 metres, it suddenly lifted off the ground. A noise, like air being forcibly released from a balloon, was noticed. The UFO climbed rapidly and within 10 seconds had disappeared into clouds. There were no other witnesses to the encounter save a dozen or so dogs. While the object was stationary, they were all barking loudly at it. After it took off, they were all strangely silent. A geologist made independent calculations at the landing site which confirmed definite traces of an unusual object having rested there. He stated that the vegetation there was dying and would remain dead for a number of years. The RAAF put forward a possible explanation for this extraordinary incident. They suggested it was a 'tornado'.

THE 1966 TULLY SAUCER 'NEST'

1966 was a major year for UFO activity in Australia. The UFO landing at Horseshoe Lagoon near Tully, far north Queensland, is one of the best known accounts of an apparent UFO landing

report. It introduced the term UFO 'nest'. The locality saw further UFO sightings for many years. The RAAF files describe the famous Tully incident in the following manner.

'At about 9.00 a.m. on 19 January 1966, Mr George Pedley, a banana grower of Tully, Qld, observed a light grey non-reflecting dull object, reported to be about 25 feet long and eight feet deep, rise vertically then climb above marshland which was situated about 25 yards away. There was a hissing noise which decreased as the object rose. The apparent shape was described as "two saucers, face to face", but no structural detail was observed. Pedley only saw the object for 15 seconds and it disappeared in mid-air whilst receding into the distance.

'A clearly defined, near circular, depression remained in swamp grass at the point from which the object was seen rising, and measured about 32 feet long by 25 feet wide. The grass was flattened in clockwise curves to water level within the circle and the reeds had been uprooted from the mud. There was no scorching of grass or surrounding trees and the observer stated that there was no smell of combustion'.

The following details are from the police report which Pedley filled out with Sergeant Moylan of the local police. Because so many conflicting claims have been made about what Pedley said at the time, it is worth quoting the actual report.

'Observer reported this matter to Tully Police at 7.30 p.m. on 19/1/66 and at 7 a.m. 20/1/66 went with me to the site of the depression in the swamp. His version then included the information that the object rose vertically, appeared to dip slightly and then went off in straight climbing path. He then said that there was no smell of combustion and no scorching of grass or trees visible; that the flattened grass or rushes was quite green when he first saw the depression; on his return that afternoon the grass had turned brown.

Tn this matter I formed the opinion that the depressed area in the swamp grass had been caused by a small helicopter and that the observer, in the early morning bright sunlight shining on the

rotor may have mistaken the shape. His description of the take-off lent some strength to my opinion. However there was cleared land to the east for about 200 yards where such an aircraft could have more safely landed instead of the position indicated by the observer, close to trees. Later I was informed by Wallace Evans of Tully, an electrician, that he has seen similar markings in a swamp at Kurrumine Beach and is quite certain that it was caused by a whirlwind, sucking up water into a waterspout, uprooting the grass and laying it out in a similar pattern. At 3.30 p.m. 21/1/66 I took a sample of the grass at the site and have forwarded it under separate cover'.

According to the Secretary of the Department of Air, Mr A.B. McFarlane, on 11 February 1966: 'Investigations of the area surrounding the reported "nests", testing of samples taken from around them and interrogation of persons involved in the report failed to reveal anything of significance. However, during enquiries a number of local residents stated that the reported "nests" are fairly common during the onset of the "wet". Furthermore, the University of Queensland stated that there was nothing unnatural in the samples submitted and assessed that the "nests" could have been the result of severe turbulence, which normally accompany line squalls and thunderstorms prevalent in North Queensland at that time of the year. There is no explanation for the visible phenomena reported but it could have been associated with or the result of "down draughts", "willy willies" or "water spouts" that are known to occur in the area.

Tn January of this year a number of photographs taken from an airfield in the tropics offer a fine example of the type and growth of cloud formation occurring with a severe "down draught". This whirling mass of tropical air associated with thunderstorm activity, may, on reaching the earth's surface, dissipate and subside. Or it may persist, giving rise to dust eddies, water spouts, etc, and leaving a telltale circular pattern on the ground.

'Should it occur over a swampy reed bed the effect would be to flatten the reeds with a circular pattern. Resultant photographs and investigations of the "nests" seem to fit in with this theory and is accepted as a possible cause of the phenomena'.

The Tully affair has been mentioned extensively in the UFO literature over the years, and many inaccuracies and misconceptions have developed. These problems became more critical when the incident became linked to the English 'crop circle' controversy. The prominent schools of thought on the crop circle formations adopted the Tully incident as a classic example of their perceived explanations for the circle complexes. For various reasons the comparison is invalid. These reasons are too complicated to be gone into here, but include obvious differences such as that the events at Tully occurred during the day, while the English crop circles are made at night.

THE BENT HEADLIGHT BEAMS AFFAIR

The Burkes Flat close encounter involved the reported 'bending' of car headlight beams and a related physical trace. A car fatality at the same spot has been connected with the UFO incident. At about 8 p.m. on 4 April 1966 Ron Sullivan, a steel construction businessman from Maryborough, was travelling on a straight sealed section of the Dunolly—St Arnaud road, near Burkes Flat, in central country Victoria. In a paddock off to his right, Sullivan observed an unusual light. He first took it to be a tractor, engaged in night ploughing, but as he drew closer, Sullivan began to see a most unusual light display, located at ground level. The following things happened quickly as he drew closer to the scene, and then passed it. Sullivan was paying attention to both the light display in the paddock on his right and the road. To his surprise his car's headlight beams appeared to be pointing off to the right in the direction of the strange light display and also seemed to be bending back on an axis seemingly coincident with the object's position in relation to the paddock and road. As he got closer, the angle of bending of the car's headlight beams became more acute. He thought his car must have been heading off the road to the right, and immediately compensated by turning it to the left. He found he was now heading directly towards a tree on the left hand side of the road. Sullivan turned the car to the right and regained the direction of

travel along the straight section of road, thoroughly confused and leaving behind the strange display in the paddock.

Sullivan observed the following sequence of light display in the strange phenomenon in the paddock. He saw a white phosphorous type of light on the ground, that appeared to be about five metres in diameter. Sullivan told me, 'It opened up and there was another white oval on top of it, about 30 feet in height, coming down making the shape of a cone, and in that cone were tubes of coloured lights—all the lights as you see as you look through the spectrum, "all the colours of the rainbow" travelling up and down from the small oval to the bigger oval at the top. They were going up and down in shafts. Then gradually the top seemed to come to meet the bottom. They seemed to close in, making a transition of one light oval. Everything then just disappeared'. The last thing Sullivan saw of the light display was 'just a spot on the ground, becoming smaller and smaller, to nothing'.

Ron Sullivan had his car lights checked and found them to be working properly. Back in Maryborough, he found that a young man from Carnegie, Gary Taylor, had been killed in a car accident at Burkes Flat on the night of 6 April. Sullivan reported his experience to police. At the accident site, it was determined that Taylor's car had collided with the same tree that Sullivan almost collided with two nights earlier, as he fought to control his car during the 'bend headlight beam' episode. Directly opposite the tree in the paddock, about 20 metres from the roadway, coincident with where Sullivan saw the strange light display, a shallow depression was found in the fallowed ground. It was a little over one metre in diameter and only six or so centimetres in depth. The depression was cleanly scooped out of the sandy soil with no apparent debris around it. There were no human or animal tracks around the area. The property owner indicated the depression had not been there when he had finished fallowing. There appeared to be no explanation for the depression or the light display.

THE WESTALL SCHOOL SENSATION

Two days after the Burkes Flat incident, Victoria was the setting of a UFO sensation. This time there were numerous witnesses and the sighting occurred in daylight. Despite the extraordinary nature of the incident only fragmentary details emerged and it has been suggested by some witnesses and researchers that there were attempts to prevent details of the case from being made public. At about 11 a.m. on 6 April 1966 numerous schoolchildren and some teachers at Westall High school, in Clayton, a Melbourne suburb, observed a UFO which landed nearby. An account by one of the students appeared in the school magazine, the *Clayton Calendar*.

'I was in class when the disturbance occurred outside. I didn't take any notice and when the bell went for morning recess my classmates and I went to our lockers and then walked out into the yard. We noticed that all the girls who were doing Physical Education were gathered right down near the end of our playing field. Suddenly the school came alive with excitement and everyone began running down towards where the girls were. I was among the surging mob. I had seen something that looked very unusual in the sky.

'As I looked up I saw a dazzling, silvery object flying around some pine trees which grew on a ridge about a quarter of a mile directly behind the school. It then flew across some open paddocks also behind the school and returned to the pines. On the other side of the ridge there is a small field. The thing hovered over the pines and descended behind them and must have been directly over the field. I then lost sight of it because of the pines.

'As the thing was out of sight I began to notice many private aircraft, mainly Cessnas, flying towards the pines. The thing reappeared and rose to the level of the approaching aircraft. This enabled me to get a rough idea of its size. It was a silvery object as long as one of the Cessnas, but very thin.

'As the aircraft approached, the thing tilted on about a 45 degree angle and started to move into the distance, gradually gaining height. The planes increased their speed and began

to follow it, but the object streaked away leaving the planes far, far behind. The planes turned back, and we all stood hoping it would return but it didn't, so we all went into school, 15 minutes late.

'After school two friends and I went to the field where the object had descended. In a few minutes we were crawling under a barbed-wire fence which surrounded the field at a height of about four feet. We waded through the waist-high grass making for a gap in it. Suddenly we were there. We found ourselves standing in a spot where the grass had been utterly crushed against the earth. It was an area of about 25—30 feet in diameter. Cows could not have done it because the fence was barbed, and also cows would have left a track through the grass. There was no track. The object had descended over the field; could it have done this? It all leads back to the same question. What was the object? Some people say it was a weather balloon, but do weather balloons go up and down quickly, crush grass and fly across the skies faster than reasonably speedy aircraft? Otherwise, your guess is as good as mine'.

The *Dandenong Journal*, a local newspaper, attributed the following information to Mr Greenwood, the school's science teacher: 'He said five light aircraft were circling the object and were flying at a relatively low altitude. The aircraft had played a "cat & mouse" kind of game with the object. He described the object as like a thin beam of light, about half the length of a light aircraft. It was silvery-grey and seemed to thicken at times.

'The thickening was similar to when a disc is turned a little to show the underside. The object was never really stationary. It seemed to move from side to side and up and down.

'At first there was one plane apparently observing the object. Later, Mr Greenwood noticed five aircraft which attempted to follow the object as it occasionally accelerated back and forth from east to west. Mr Greenwood first saw the object when it rose into the air from behind pine trees near the school. After about 20 minutes (at about the end of morning recess) Greenwood looked away, and when he looked back it had disappeared'.

The paper reported that one pilot, Bob Ford, indicated he had been flying 'somewhere in that area' at the time, but did not see anything unusual. No other pilots were found who indicated they had been in the area and saw something. Another student, Marilyn Eastwood, described the object as 'round, with a hump on top and round things underneath'. Still another witness, Ms A, described to me how she had seen three UFOs that day. According to her, two of them had landed, and she had seen two large circles of flattened and burnt grass. She indicated their width was about 15 metres across. She recollected how the military had arrived at their house the next day. Her mother, and brother went in a truck with her to the landing site. They were told to stay in the truck while the military investigated. They took samples of earth. Ms A recollected overhearing a RAAF officer saying that the earth must have been subjected to extreme heat, as it had been burnt. The military were insistent that the family say nothing about what they had witnessed. While her mother has since died, her brother partially confirmed the story. He had been about three years younger than his sister, and was attending the adjacent primary school. A woman who was serving in the tuck shop at the time of the commotion also saw the UFOs.

A school prefect years later described to Dr Ian Gordon, who was then working in the Victorian Education Department curriculum development section, how he had been in a chemistry class during the incident. He and other students, and teachers, had seen through the windows what seemed to be a silver-blue object of a 'classic flying saucer shape', come down behind a group of pine trees in an undeveloped area, not more than 200 metres from Fairbank Road. There had been two objects according to what he had heard but he only saw what seems to have been the first of these.

All of a sudden everyone in the sports class, including some of the teachers, took off in a south-west direction. According to the prefect, the thing had come down behind a group of pine trees, and everyone had run off in a mass evacuation of the school, all 'after a flying saucer'. A large area of flattened grass was found there, perfectly circular in shape, about 10 metres in diameter, with three scorch marks. The grass was very dry, but it

hadn't started a fire. A man approached the school group, and told them all 'to piss off' because it was private property. The property had been standing idle for many years. The man walked through the area of flattened grass and seemed to 'ignore its existence', according to the prefect. When he was told by numerous screaming children that a flying saucer had come down there, he said 'bull shit' and various other things. The school children eventually returned to the school, accompanied by a number of teachers who had 'followed the mass exodus'.

The prefect was berated by the school principal for being 'irresponsible' in following the rest of the students and teachers. Students were forbidden to talk to the press. Some students were interviewed in Rosebank Avenue, near the school. There was a phone call to the principal. He made an announcement that no such thing had been seen and put it down to 'mass hysteria'.

There were allegedly a couple of unmarked planes, aluminium coloured, seemingly silent, flying over the area at the time, very slowly. The prefect indicated that from the time of the thing coming down to when the school group arrived at the landing site had been little more than five minutes. It was gone when the group arrived. The prefect indicated there had been a secondary mark with no scorch marks to the south of the main site, which suggested that a second object may have landed. That object had been seen coming down very shortly after the first. The site was not flattened right down like the main one. It appeared to be just a swirled pattern in the grass in an anti-clockwise direction. Some students said they saw the object take off after it had come down, but most seem to have only seen something come down and later sighted the ground traces. There was apparently talk with some teachers, according to the prefect, that the craft must have been some sort of secret Air Force test weapon.

Ray Fischer of the Victorian UFO Research Society revealed to me that they had interviewed a man who came on the scene at about 5 p.m. of the day of the sightings. He saw a 'a perfect circle of flattened grass, flattened right down to ground level, in grass that was about two feet high'. This man recollected that he thought the area was about 10 metres in diameter. He returned a few days later to find a team of 'military or Air Force people'

going over the site. A couple of technical-looking vans were parked outside. He saw that people in uniform were examining the circle with radiation detectors. Officials there told him he couldn't go into the field and to move on. This gentleman returned to the site a third time, only to find that the paddock had been burnt out.

Several other events are alleged to have been related to this fascinating affair. Some witnesses described seeing a cow in the paddock, where the UFO came down. It was alleged to have been in such a distressed state that it eventually had to be put down. There have been persistent stories that one schoolgirl, the first student to arrive at the landing site, was found be in a dazed, trancelike state, as if she was very shocked. There were unconfirmed rumours that this girl never fully recovered from this experience and spent some time in a hospital at Kew. A teacher who took photos of the site was allegedly told by the headmaster that 'if you want to keep on teaching you have to keep your mouth shut and we want the film'. The film allegedly ended up in the hands of the RAAF or Army, but there has been no confirmation of that detail.

A woman claimed the UFO involved in the Westall school landing had hovered over her house, above trees, before it landed behind the school. The UFO was allegedly above the trees for five or 10 minutes before it landed. The woman claimed the UFO 'was trying to find a place to land'. She states she followed it, but that 'it started to get a bit spooky'. She started to return home, but then went back, only to be turned away by police. One source indicated that 200 to 300 kids raced down to the fence where the UFO had landed. There was 'some guy walking around in white overalls and he was telling everyone to keep back and another guy appeared and he had some sort of uniform. Both men had overalls—one was fully white—the other had a dark uniform, but it had an emblem or a logo on it'. According to that source, these men were normal-looking, and seemed to be walking around the UFO on the ground. 'One of the guys disappeared into the aircraft—the one on the ground—they didn't see where the other one went—the last they saw, he was around the other side of them. They disappeared'. It was alleged by at least one

source that the UFO had 'sort of crash landed', that there were three 'aircraft hovering above it. They were white—they didn't have wings and they didn't have engines—all they did was hum. The humming got louder when they took off. Then within a few minutes, this "flying saucer" took off'.

There is little doubt that something of an extraordinary nature was seen over the Westall school area and that at least one of these objects appears to have landed and apparently left behind some physical traces. Numerous witnesses confirm these basic details. Other more exotic details vary in credibility, some seemingly complementing each other and some apparently contradicting the generally accepted story of events.

1967 ACTIVITY

Several striking cases occurred in 1967. On 16 March, Barry Morris, an assistant storeman, and his fiancee's mother, Vera Lidden, encountered a UFO while travelling from St George to Mitchell, in Queensland, on the Mitchell Highway. They first saw a greenish light at about 8.30 p.m., 64 kilometres from Mitchell. It took on a bright silvery appearance as it seemed to come closer. Barry Morris indicated, 'It went out of sight behind trees, but I saw it when the road took a sharp turn to the left. It was 100 yards off the road in a clearing near some trees'. He described the object as, 'This 12 feet high by 15 feet long sphere, flat on the bottom, (which) was hovering about a foot off the ground. In the front was an open doorway, about the size of a kitchen door, and a fold-up hatchway led to the ground'. From a smoky haze inside the doorway, a very bright blue-white light, like a welding arc, seemed to emanate and light up the surrounding bush. The object appeared to have a silvery colour, similar to the lustre of unpainted metal. As the car approached the object the radio stopped working, while the lights and engine remained unaffected. Morris said, 'I didn't stop. I was scared, and pushed the car as fast as it would go'. About three kilometres further along, the UFO reappeared and followed the car until it disappeared about eight kilometres out of Mitchell. Morris added, 'On

the way back I detoured 60 miles to get home'. He returned the following day and found apparent physical traces of the UFO at the site. These consisted of three rectangular holes, each about 15 centimetres wide, 30 centimetres long, and seven centimetres deep, arranged in an equilateral triangle, with sides about one metre long. The St George region was to develop an unusual reputation. It was haunted by UFOs. Many people, both locals and visitors, would bear witness to strange aerial visitors.

The RAAF files revealed a striking close encounter near Burrenjuck Dam, near Yass, in New South Wales, at about 12.40 a.m. on 17 June 1967. Local police investigated the report and passed their reports onto the RAAF. A local couple were the witnesses. The report of the husband is quoted in part here.

'My attention was drawn to an object in the sky about a half a mile ahead . . . about 200 feet up in the air over an open grassed paddock and within about 200 feet of the roadway. The object I saw was a red glowing object, then I saw a blast of greyish-white light in a V shape come from this object towards the ground. It was quick. I then stopped my car and got out onto the roadway. I saw that the object was a fair size and its shape was similar to an old style beer barrel which was lying on its side.

'I saw the object moving towards Burrenjuck and parallel with the road. It was only moving slowly. I got back into my car and followed it. I was travelling at about 45 mph and was catching up to the object. I followed it for a measured one and nine-tenths miles to a place where there is a rise in the road, and at this time I was then only about 200 yards distance off the object.

'I then saw what appeared to be red lights flicking all around the object. The flicking was much quicker than that used on aircraft. I had again got out of my car on the roadway, and as I observed the object I could distinctly hear a clicking noise coming from it. It was a noise similar to an amplified noise of car blinker lights.

'As I stopped my car I saw the object make a left hand turn, and it headed off towards some hills between the towns of Bowning and Yass. The object was still only travelling at a slow speed. It did not appear to gain or loose any height. I did notice

as the object travelled away from me, it appeared to have a bouncy action from one side to the other. It was only a slight movement from side to side . . . I would say that I had the object under my observations for approximately 15 minutes'.

'I have never seen an object in the sky like this one before. It was some foreign object. I would say that it was not any form of aircraft that I know about, and I have had five years experience with aircraft in the RAAF'.

Sergeant A.B. Vale of Yass police made a close survey of the grassed paddock on the property involved, 'where the unidentified object was first seen and alleged to have emitted a blast of light towards the ground. Nothing was seen to indicate that the object had been on the ground or had caused any scorching of the grass or earth with the blast'. He added, 'I am of the opinion that these persons alleging the sighting of the UFO, have given a reliable statement of what they saw, they are both mature and highly respected citizens of Burrenjuck, and their report in this instance would be a genuine one. There is no suggestion that either of them were under the influence of liquor at the time, and it would appear that they did both see something unusual in the sky early that morning'.

The RAAF Summary of UAS lists this case as 'incomplete data' in terms of 'Possible Cause'. In fact, beyond the detailed police reports there was no real attempt to investigate it. The officer at RAAF Headquarters Operational Command prefaced the report with the annotation, 'The observer's description of the object, "like an old type beer barrel", may give us a clue. But perhaps we should put it down as "unexplained"'. In fact the RAAF treatment gives us more of a clue to the lack of seriousness and rigour in their follow up of this case and many other striking ones like it. There was a further unqualified annotation, 'Plasma?', a reference to a form of ball lightning popular in the RAAF at the time as an 'explanation', no matter how unlikely, for UFO sightings.

THE CANTERBURY CLOSE ENCOUNTER

'Sisters hysterical at sighting. WEIRD "SAUCER" OVER CANTERBURY' read the Sydney *Sun-Herald* of 8 March 1967. 'Two sisters described this week how they stood on a veranda together and watched a flying saucer hover over a Canterbury bowling green. They said the saucer was a "strange round thing" and it made a "weird humming sound".

'It came down to tree-top level and was less than 100 feet from where they stood. The woman who first made the sighting is Mrs D. Manhood, of Wairoa Street, Canterbury. Her sister, Mrs R. Coleman, joined her on the veranda seconds later and they watched the saucer's flight for 10 minutes'.

A report of the incident, compiled by Dr Duggin, explained: 'It was mid-morning. Mrs D. Manhood went outside to fetch her small daughter from the vicinity of the bowling green adjoining their residence, as it was raining. At this time Manhood observed the described object which came from the left and appeared to pass over the bowling green.

'There were no significant markings and the object appeared to change gradually from circular to elliptical. It was dark grey-black in colour. It was thought to be the size of a small car at tree-top height. If the estimate of size and distance was correct, then its speed was less than 30 mph. Manhood's initial supposition was that it may have been preparing to land on the bowling green.

'It emitted a noise similar to that given off by a child's humming top. At the time of the sighting, Manhood's sister, Mrs Coleman, was telephoning their mother. She joined Mrs Manhood to tell her that the telephone had gone dead and then she too caught sight of the strange object.

'After approximately five minutes, the object, travelling on a level and straight course, passed over the railway embankment, just above the power lines. Three witnesses saw the object pass over the embankment—Mrs Manhood, Mrs Coleman and Mrs Clavis. After about a minute, the object again appeared over the embankment and climbed at an angle of about 70 degrees to

the horizontal at a fairly good speed. It was observed by four persons as Mr Manhood had now joined the ladies. It appeared to become smaller and smaller as it climbed towards a break in the clouds and was finally lost to view after approximately five minutes'.

Dr Duggin checked with the Weather Bureau, Mascot airfield and Mascot radar. No confirmatory details were found, but a balloon was ruled out. He concluded, 'It is highly improbable that any balloon could (1) change its aspect from circular to oval or elliptical, (2) travel at a low altitude and suddenly climb again, and (3) It is virtually certain that no balloons were in the vicinity of Canterbury at the time of the reported sighting'.

THE 1969 NESTS

The next major year for reports was 1969. A nation-wide wave led to considerable media coverage. One of the main areas for activity was the north coast of New South Wales. A large area of flattened saccaline crop found on the Bungawalban property of the local member of parliament became the focus of nation-wide media attention. While fascinating, the 'nests' lacked clear UFO connections. An extraordinary close encounter report at Harwood Island, on the north coast, provided that missing dimension. The case remained hidden for a few years, until the witness, a local woman, wrote to me.

On 20 April 1969, three days after the Bungawalban find, the Harwood Island woman was out walking. She saw and heard a large patch of two year-old sugar cane rustling and waving violently, on what was a still night. A very powerful beam of light came across the top of the cane and very slowly turned about a half circle until it was in front of the witness. The woman felt as if some powerful force was lifting her off the ground and drawing her towards the source of the beam. This 'force' stopped when the 'high beam' went out. The woman found herself still on the ground. She could then clearly see a strange object over the top of the cane. The 'high beam' had been replaced by a sort of 'low beam' and 'cabin lights' emanating from a large helmet-

shaped object, situated only some 15 metres away, and about two metres above the top of the cane (which itself was about four metres high). It was a dark shiny, grey colour all over, and the glow from the inside lights was pale yellow, pinkish red, and a very faint tint of green. The glow came on to the brim of the object and around the head part of it. Out of the top was this thin trail of smoke. Below the object the violent movement in the cane had given way to a mere slight rustling. It seemed that after about a minute the arrival sequence was totally reversed, with the violent movement in the cane recurring. A whistling sound commenced, then nothing. The woman did not see the object depart, but assumed it just disappeared at fantastic speed. The witness said the experience had taken place at about 7.30 p.m. Another woman and her daughter were fishing nearby downstream from the Harwood bridge. They saw 'a very bright red light, with a whitish tail, which appeared to be suspended above the bridge. We saw it for several seconds and then it just disappeared'. They said their sighting occurred around 8 p.m., half an hour after the striking close encounter. Although the connection seems weak, such details of the time difference between the two reports might be seized upon as proof positive of a possible 'missing time' incident.

THE GREENACRE SIGHTING

At half past seven on the night of 25 April 1969 a woman and her eleven year-old daughter, whom I will call Mrs Crane and Debra, were travelling by taxi past Roberts Park in the Sydney suburb of Greenacre, when they saw a UFO. It should be emphasised that experienced UFO researchers later interviewed Mrs Crane and felt she was a stable and reputable person. It is important to note this because of the assumption, among some sceptics, that everyone who sees a UFO is either mistaken, a liar, or mentally unstable. The truth is that people like myself are experienced at detecting people with dishonest or unsound motives—the last thing we want to do is waste our time investigating fantasies. As Mrs Crane's case shows, any threat to

the mental stability of people who genuinely believe they have seen UFOs often comes from the reaction they receive after the event, rather than from the experience itself.

Young boys were playing football under spotlights in Roberts Park. Suddenly the two women spotted a large illuminated object, like a 'Japanese Lantern', at a height of about 30 metres above the park. A minute later, as the taxi turned a corner, they saw it again and Mrs Crane called out to the driver, 'Would you slow down, there's something strange in the sky here'. The driver, who was obviously scared, pulled over to the curb. The craft was about 10 metres in diameter, and looked like 'two soup bowls joined rim-to-rim'. There was a steady red light on top. It had a large, transparent front section, illuminated by a blue glow, which enabled the people to see inside. A humanoid figure was clearly visible, apparently operating some sort of controls near the window. Another figure was pointing to the witnesses. A third seemed to be walking towards a back door. All three figures were apparently human size. They were wearing black, tight-fitting clothing which perhaps covered their faces, as no features were noticed by the women. The figures were wearing boots, although not belts. Their shoulders were broad and slightly rounded, and Mrs Crane thought they were solidly built.

The boys in the park apparently did not notice the extraordinary display above them, due to the bright canopy of light formed by the spotlights. Mrs Crane tried to talk to the driver about what they were seeing but he seemed distraught and kept mumbling and looking at the object then away again. At last, increasingly agitated, he blurted out, 'C'mon, it's only the floodlights you're seeing' and frantically drove off down the road. He dropped the two women at a taxi rank. Mrs Crane, after she got out, turned to give him the fare but he sped off, to the surprise of the Cranes and of the people who were waiting at the rank. Subsequent attempts to contact the driver, who had a heavy Greek accent, failed, even though the company for which he worked was approached soon after. It is possible the man had his own reasons for not wanting to become involved with the authorities.

Mrs Crane and Debra went into the block of flats where they

lived in a daze, stunned by the experience. Later they returned to the park, but there was no sign of the object. Mrs Crane's husband was sympathetic but over the next few days she was aware of conflicting emotions concerning her experience. She felt 'lifted by the experience', and told one person that it made her feel special. 'I'm just a nobody', she said, 'but I have seen this . . . it makes me feel good to think all those people out there are not as privileged'. But her attempts to communicate her experience to the world were to produce a range of less satisfying emotions.

A few days later Mrs Crane rang the Sydney Observatory. The person she spoke to plainly just wanted to get her off the phone, and without asking for many details offered a variety of 'explanations' which were clearly ridiculous. Next Mrs Crane rang the Richmond Air Force Base and received a similar response. The officer she spoke to told her the object was in fact Tight reflections against the cab window'. When she explained she had wound down the window during the sighting, he refused to discuss the matter further. Mrs Crane was receiving the runaround experienced by so many Australians who have turned to the authorities for help after going through an extraordinary experience. Finally Mrs Crane discovered a UFO group and began to attend meetings, in an attempt to find out more about what she had been through. She participated in a television documentary, which led to unexpected complications.

The woman who lived in the flat above Mrs Crane was a Jehovah's Witness and, although this was not directly related to her membership of that religion, decided that Mrs Crane was lying about her experience and deserved to be punished. This led to harassment in the form of loud stamping on the floor throughout the night, phone calls, face-to-face confrontations, and the scrawling of words and symbols on Mrs Crane's washing. The Crane family were forced to seek an unlisted phone number and leave their flat, which meant they were no longer entitled to a permanent housing commission flat, for which they had been waiting for years. Mrs Crane had a nervous breakdown as a result of this. She has now recovered and it is significant that today the memories of her daughter and herself correlate

exactly with those they gave soon after the incident. This is evidence, surely, that they did indeed see something extraordinary on Anzac Day 1969.

CHAPTER TEN

—the 1970s—

One night during June 1970 a truck driver, travelling from Coffs Harbour to Grafton, saw a bright light on the ocean side of the highway in the area of Emerald Beach. It was just after midnight. The light seemed to come from a circular object which rose from behind timber, some 180 metres from the road. It rose for a few seconds, then hovered for about half a minute at an estimated altitude of 20 metres. Relative to the trees, the UFO appeared to be about 10 metres in diameter, and what appeared to be flames were noticed along the bottom of the object. The object then slowly returned to the ground. Though partly obscured by timber, 'while on the ground light rays could still be seen going up at an angle from top and sides'. The object was still on the ground when fear of the unknown forced the truck driver to leave the area. The driver was later able to show me three clear and widely spaced angles of view, enabling triangulation to locate the site. There I found a well defined 10 metre circle in the long grass. Inside the circle the long grass was almost completely absent. A less defined 10 metre circle was evident close by. There were a further four circles of smaller dimensions (between four and seven metres in diameter). The

site also had a number of burnt trees. Spectroscopy and other tests revealed no significant differences in the soil samples inside and outside the 'main circle'.

THE KEMPSEY-MACLEAY RIVER UFO HAUNTING

The town of Kempsey situated on the Macleay River in northern New South Wales has had a long history of UFO sightings. During September 1913 'a fireball or will-o'-the-wisp' sighted up the Macleay River was reported as 'making the curious speculate'. During November 1914 the sky over the Macleay and Maria rivers played host to a nocturnal mystery, complete with mystery planes, 'machinery hums', flashing 'signalling' lights, and an aerial searchlight which 'was visible for ten minutes when it coursed south and disappeared'. There were reports through the 1950s and 1960s, but UFO activity was the most intense during 1971. Like a small number of other areas throughout the rest of Australia, sightings have continued, suggesting that factors common to the area are of significance to the manifestation of the UFO phenomenon. Enquiries into these areas may eventually lead to the elucidation of the nature and motive of this elusive phenomenon.

Just after dinner time on Friday 2 April, at least 14 Kempsey residents observed what appeared to be a pink flare approaching the river from the south. Reaching the river, the light turned, following the course of the Macleay River, in a north-westerly direction. It finally disappeared in the direction of Greenhill, an Aboriginal settlement. It was at Greenhill that an extraordinary drama unfolded several hours later on the same night. While the 'flare' observations may be open to question, what occurred at Greenhill was rather more bizarre and difficult to explain.

At about 10.00 p.m., a man went into the kitchen of his home at Greenhill to get a drink of water. Suddenly he saw a 'small face pressed against the window pane. It had no hair and was the shape of a small saucer'. Too terrified to run away, he was drawn towards the face by some unseen force. His wife, who was in the next room, heard glass breaking and ran into the kitchen just in

time to see her husband disappearing horizontally through the top section of the bottom window. The man was apparently lifted bodily a distance of one and a half metres and transported horizontally without any body movement, smashing through a window pane above a sink piled high with dishes. He landed on his back two metres below the window level, but he wasn't even winded or stunned by the fall. The man's wife rushed outside to see him jump up and run 'like hell down to the gravel near the house', where she found him crying and shaking.

On 23 April three children outside the Collombatti Rail post office observed a 'fiery object' with four legs flying over them. A Kempsey school teacher, Mrs Jill French, saw what might have been the same object.

Further inland, in the community of Willi Willi on 10 May, 15 year old Sue Johnson was holidaying with her grandparents, Mr and Mrs John T. Fischer. At 5.15 p.m. Sue was feeding carrots to a horse in the paddock when the animal became very skittish and began prancing about and snorting excitedly. At the same time, the family dog ran out of the house barking and whining. Sue suddenly noticed that the evening sky had changed from grey to pink and the clouds to flaming red. In the local *Argus* she related the following account: 'I saw this red streak above my head. It was quite long and came fast across the southern sky. A moment later I saw this metallic thing. It seemed to slow down and hovered over my head as if looking for something. This was when I started yelling, because it seemed right over my head and not at a very great altitude. It gave me such a fright1'.

When it was directly above her, the object came to a smooth stop, and hovered. Sue began yelling out and ran for the house. The object then resumed its forward movement, slowly accelerating. It then put on a burst of speed arcing up and over Mount Sebastopol. 'The thing seemed to have a belly the shape of a football. The top was peaked and the sides sloped to join the belly. It was close enough for me to see very strange marks at each end. They were oddly angled and the one at the front end was over what appeared to be a door of some sort. The tail—the exhaust—was astonishingly red and long. What was most extraordinary was the fact that there was no noise whatsoever. The

thing seemed so close to me that if it had been an aircraft, I would have been deafened by the noise. There was another strange thing. As the object went into the hills, the sky turned back to a grey colour and the clouds to pink. This all happened in a matter of minutes'. Mr Fischer and his married daughter, Helen Ross, were attracted by Sue's calls and were in time to see the object disappearing towards the north. Ross said, 'You could not credit the speed of it. It took about 90 seconds to cross the sky'. The red 'exhaust' could be seen long after the object had vanished.

In July 1975 a brilliant object made a spectacular flight over Kempsey. A young couple, Glenn and Jenni Waters, were driving across the Kempsey traffic bridge, Their attention was drawn to a very large and bright white light directly overhead. It seemed to he travelling in a westerly direction at an altitude somewhere between 150 and 300 metres, at a speed somewhat faster than a plane. The couple chased the object across the town, finally stopping at River Street. They watched the strange object travel across the valley, over the community of Euroka, and hover apparently over the Great Dividing Range mountains in the west. The time was eight o'clock. They noticed that the cows in the field beyond the fence were bellowing and the dogs beyond were apparently barking. The hovering object was changing colours from white through to yellow and red. According to Jenni Waters the UFO appeared to move in 'a sort of angular circle'.

While the couple were observing the UFO, Glenn Waters realised he had his camera in the car. He ran to get it and took one photograph at about 8.05 p.m., approximately two minutes after they stopped the car. He then moved slightly to the right, and set the camera up on a tripod and took two further photos. Just as he was about to attach a telescopic lens to the camera, the object moved straight down in the hills in the distance. The cows then stopped bellowing. The couple reported their experience to the *Argus* and one of the photos was subsequently published. I interviewed the couple in October 1975 and subsequently examined the three photos. These indicate that a bright light source was slowly descending as the three photos were taken. It stayed at about the same altitude for the last two photos, but during the

same period appeared to have moved slightly, from left to right (south to north). The entire observation lasted about 15 minutes.

Two members of the Lyttle family observed what may have been the same object from a caravan park in central Kempsey. Mrs Lyttle and one of her sons observed the object. Her son was on his way to the showers when he ran back inside to urge the family out to see a large cigar-shaped object moving towards the west. It changed colours from red to green to yellow to orange. They only saw it for a few minutes. There were apparently other witnesses but they failed to come forward.

If the photos are examined in isolation, the fact that Venus was prominent in the direction of the object could be seen as a possible explanation. But such an explanation does not cover the large angular movements over the hills, nor does it fit with the fact that both the Waters and others saw what was possibly the same object pass over Kempsey. One would have to invent the possibility of a meteor or something else to cover this aspect. The Waters were certain that the object they saw passing over the town was the same object seen over the hills. Indeed they had seen the object travel across the valley to take up the position where it was photographed. Venus may have been hidden by a large tree or the hill tops during the sighting. Ultimately this incident represents intriguing possible evidence for the UFOs haunting the Kempsey area.

THE INTERRUPTED JOURNEY

On the night of 1 August 1971 a Finnish couple, Ben and Helen, were returning home after visiting friends. The couple left Gladstone soon after 11.35 p.m. Having found no petrol stations open, they were very low on fuel but decided to risk the trip to Rockhampton, hoping to find an open petrol station in one of the small centres on the way, before their tank ran dry. The night was foggy and dark. By midnight, they had arrived at the Calliope River Bridge. After passing over it, and beginning to travel along the straight stretch of road that followed, they saw a Caltex station on the left side of the road, north of Mount Larcom, some

30 kilometres beyond the Calliope River Bridge. The station was closed but, after driving a bit past it, Ben became aware that he could see 'a green light at the level of the treetops' in the rear view mirror. His wife confirmed the presence of two green lights.

Then, Ben said, 'Suddenly we had a feeling that we had been driving straight forward all the time. The road seemed straight, foggy, and surrounded by trees [in this area the roads are usually winding]. And we had a feeling that we were repeating the same words over and over again. We thought we should have been arriving at Mount Larcom'.

Suddenly, the couple saw a light to their left and, above them, a circle of lights, similar to those on a merry-go-round or carousel. The next thing they saw was the Port Alma road sign, some 60 kilometres north of Calliope River. Immediately after this observation, the couple found themselves at a railroad crossing outside Rockhampton, about 30 kilometres from Mount Morgan. Ben said, 'We wondered how we had managed to get so far and why we had not seen any villages on the way. We should have seen at least four of them. We felt that something strange had happened to us. We were afraid. I took a rifle out of the trunk and loaded it. We drove to Rockhampton with the rifle on my knees. Our dog, Candy, who usually sleeps on the back seat, was afraid and wanted to come to the front seat'.

In the middle of Rockhampton, the couple found an open petrol station. It was there that the bizarre nature of the trip really struck home. They were shocked to find that the time was only 15 minutes past midnight. Only 40 minutes had passed since they had left Gladstone. At the average speed which the couple estimated they were driving at, some 65 kph, the trip time should have been over an hour, probably closer to two hours. It seemed that the couple covered the distance in almost half the required time and, on top of that, had no conscious recollection of passing through any villages. They only remembered the Caltex station and the Port Alma road sign.

The service station attendant in Rockhampton became very interested in that. Then peculiar things were discovered on the car. The 1971 Valiant sedan was covered with a very thin film of odourless oil. The attendant could not identify it but suggested it

would be used on 'very fine machinery unknown to him'. In the corners of the oil-covered bonnet, four round marks, two in each rear corner, were noticed. All were identical, being one eighth of an inch deep and nine inches in diameter. In the middle of each circle there was a spot—a one inch solid circle. Oil traces ran in two stripes from the circles towards the nose of the car. A defect in the duco, described as being burnt, was found on the right-hand-side front of the bonnet, above the headlight.

The mystery deepened as the number of people gathering around the car, in curiosity, grew. Ben said, 'After a while another driver came to the station. He said he had passed us before the Calliope River. He couldn't understand how we could have arrived at Rockhampton before him. Finally, we went to the police station and told our story to a young officer there. After examining the oil and marks on the bonnet, all he could say was, 'I have often fallen asleep at the steering wheel and woken up after 200–300 miles'.

The couple wanted to contact the local newspaper but, at that hour, it was closed. They drove around Rockhampton for a while, with their car drawing stares wherever they stopped. In an effort to reconcile events, Ben says, 'Slowly it dawned on us what happened. As we were so concerned about the petrol station, UFOs lifted us from Calliope River, past Mount Larcom, to the Caltex Service Station, and from there, during a second lift, via Port Alma Junction, to the railway crossing a couple of miles from Rockhampton. We continued our trip around three o'clock and had 300 miles of foggy driving ahead of us. We were wishing that UFOs would come and help us again, but that didn't eventuate. During the following day we did inspect our car more carefully and thought that the paint work had burned, lifting off in flakes. This wasn't the case; as the oil, mixed with dust, had started to dry up, it produced this flaking. We tried and found out the mixture of oil and dust was water soluble'.

The experience changed the couple's lives to a degree. They subsequently saw a number of UFOs and Helen had several possibly related experiences of telepathy. An analysis was done on the 'burnt' spot on the bonnet by Finnish UFO researchers and it was concluded that the site came in contact with extreme heat.

Hypnotic regression was also attempted on the couple, but nothing further was elicited. Each time hypnosis was induced, and recall of that evening was attempted, both would begin to shake violently. The hypnotist gave up the attempt. Subsequent 'recollections' suggest memories of a strange entity and a strange environment. I have spoken with the couple more recently. They remain puzzled by the experience.

MAUREEN PUDDY AND THE UFO

Maureen Puddy drove regularly along the isolated Mooraduc Road on the Momington Peninsula, Victoria. She travelled up and down the road regularly during July 1972, visiting her young son in hospital. On 3 July she was on her way home along the road when, at 9.15 p.m., the area was lit up by a blue light. Stopping to find out what was going on she immediately observed that the source of the light was a large disc-shaped object hovering about 30 metres in the air. In her fright, she drove away quickly with the object following for several kilometres before it appeared to streak away. On the night of 24 July, Maureen thought she could hear someone calling her name but could not determine the source of the 'voices'. When she retired to bed, it was a restless sleep. Throughout the night a 'human' voice called her name in a slow manner. The next night, as she was returning from the hospital again, the same blue light lit up the road as Maureen reached the location of the earlier encounter. This time she did not want to stop, but when she tried to accelerate the car out of the area nothing happened. The car started to decelerate steadily and glide towards the side of the road. Nothing she did with the car could stop this movement.

The car came to a halt and 'all the sound drained out of the air' and there was an eerie silence. Some audio 'impressions' followed, apparently emanating from the UFO, now hovering above her car. 'Do not panic . . . we mean no harm'. Maureen thought, 'I can't understand'. Then followed three statements: 'All your tests will be negative'. There was a pause, then, 'Tell me dear comrade, do not panic, we mean no harm', followed by

a pause of about a minute, then, 'You now have control'. With this final message, the car's engine started itself and the object was gone. Maureen drove away in near panic, eventually reporting her experience to police. Other people in the area also reported unusual UFO sightings that night.

Maureen was the centre of a bizarre 'contact' experience witnessed by two experienced UFO investigators, Judy Magee and Paul Norman. On 22 February 1973 Maureen had returned to the site of the earlier encounters. She appeared to become genuinely agitated and distressed and seemed to slip into some sort of altered state. She described seeing an entity and being taken into a strange room. Both investigators saw nothing other than an apparently genuinely distressed woman.

THE MOUNT BUTLER INCIDENT

During the early morning darkness of 15 September 1972 three university students were in their house near Mount Butler, outside of Armidale in New South Wales, talking and listening to music. A commotion was heard amongst the farm animals outside. One of them went to investigate. What he saw shocked him and he screamed for the others to come outside. Floating in a slow semi-circle near the house was a monk-like apparition. No limbs could be seen and a black void was present where the face should have been. One of the students, Greg, apparently made a sudden move, and the other two thought they saw the apparition vanish in a flash of light. It was their impression that this flash of light travelled towards Greg and entered him at chest height. Puzzled, the two men went over to Greg and found him in a much distressed state. He was shaking almost uncontrollably and was inarticulate, except for garbled attempts to convey that he was 'really sick inside'.

His friends helped him inside. He stayed in much the same condition until they ventured outside again. Two of the farm horses galloped up to meet them. One of them, a favourite of Greg's, came up to him and the other two students then thought they saw a flash of light leave Greg, enter the horse and then leave it, dissipating finally into the night. The horse reared up

and fled. The two men now found that Greg was no longer distressed. The two friends came to think that the apparition was the spirit of Greg's father, who had died a few months earlier, and it had possessed him. Whatever the explanation, my investigations made me feel that the students had had a genuinely unsettling experience. Later that same day I observed an egg-shaped object passing over the New England campus.

Graham, another student, started living at the same property during 1973. He began to see some strange sights, particularly since he had gotten a job as a cleaner in town and was finishing late. During 1973 he had at least eight UFO sightings. I found his retelling convincing as he took me to each of the locations involved. One, unknown to him, provided a sense of authentication for his experiences. Late in March 1973 he was coming home from university in the early hours after completing a radio programme on the student radio network. He drove out of town, along the Bundurra road, then turned left onto the road that eventually leads to the Mount Butler property. Just as he passed the university's ionosphere research receiver, a grid system of metal poles, he stopped to answer a call of nature. 'I was just sort of looking at the sky, and I noticed that it was sort of shifting. About five or six lights were moving slowly in a curve formation like five lights in an arc. They were only fractionally moving at first, then they moved very slowly for about five minutes. All of a sudden, they just sort of all slid around out of the arc, into a straight line and they all just seemed to accelerate towards the south'.

The Sydney group UFO Research Projects of Australia, co-ordinated by Frank Wilks, logged a report at Rozelle, New South Wales, between 1.00 and 1.30 a.m. on 24 March 1973, of 5 fast moving flat yellow lights travelling in a loose V or 'arc' formation. This report was not publicised—Graham certainly would not have been aware of this event.

Graham also saw two different types of UFOs, 'golden balls' and what he labelled green 'plasmic balls'. His most spectacular sighting occurred during early October 1973. Returning home after his cleaning job, he was on the dirt road opposite the research station receiver again when 'This thing just seemed to float up right in the middle of the windscreen. I stopped the car

immediately. It looked like a cigar, or like a French loaf. It was fairly regular in shape, except it was tapered at the ends, and there seemed to be a type of yellow light on each end, but one end was sort of greeny and one end was red, and the middle seemed to be the same yellow . . . It didn't seem very far away. There was no impression of movement or sound. I watched it for a few seconds and then it rotated itself four times. Suddenly it shot off at an oblique angle and disappeared into the night'.

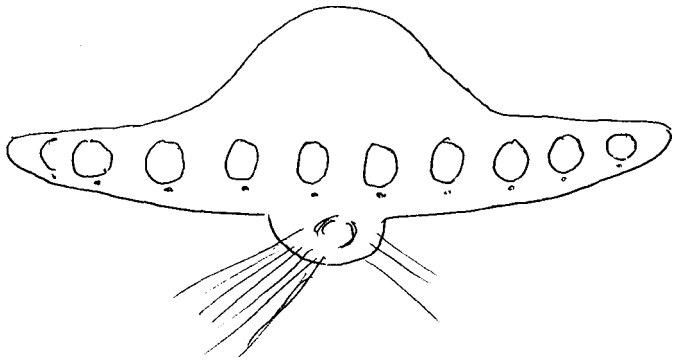
Other unusual phenomena also occurred at the farm that may have fallen into 'earth energy' type episodes. Whatever was going on, it certainly seemed to be the focus of some strange UFO and possibly paranormal phenomena.

AN EXTRAORDINARY AFFAIR NEAR NOWRA

Elizabeth C and her family regularly took their Christmas holidays on the South Coast of New South Wales. One evening, Elizabeth was driving an old Valiant car carrying four other people. The encounter occurred in early January of 1973 just as the group passed the turnoff to Sussex Inlet. Elizabeth drew the attention of the others to the presence of a light ahead. To Elizabeth it looked like the light from an approaching semi-trailer. Then it seemed to move to her left and approached the car like an aircraft passing by. It was then that events took an extraordinary turn. The object, perceived as a bright light, appeared to reverse direction and began to travel alongside the car. This represented a 180 degree change in direction for the UFO. At this point the object appeared to be very large, at ground level and quite close. It maintained a parallel course with them for approximately the next 24 kilometres.

Elizabeth described the object as large, with red lights under portholes. The red lights looked like a thin ribbon of light. Elizabeth said the night was very dark. At that point the UFO was apparent as a large disc-shaped object with possible 'window' features along its length. There appeared to be a distinct 'searchlight' beam effect that rotated around the bottom of the object. At least one of the witnesses, an army officer, who was in the

best position to see the extraordinary display, was certain that figures could be seen in the windows of the object.



Drawing of Nowra UFO based on witness' sketch

At a point near the turnoff to HMAS *Albatross* Naval Base, the object seemed to suddenly vanish. It appeared to have instantly relocated to a high altitude and moved in a large arc around Nowra and then headed out to sea, where it was lost to sight.

Later that morning, one of the group saw something decidedly odd at their campsite at Shoalhaven Heads. A large number of holidaying campers were gathered at the ocean edge. They saw a number of helicopters passing low over the campsite, heading out to sea. The helicopters were flying over a fiery mass in the water. Yet the Navy later said it knew nothing of this incident. Because of their earlier experience and the campsite events, three members of the group, including Elizabeth, went to HMAS *Albatross* to report their experience. They feared a light-hearted or even an unwelcome reception; instead the group was the subject of a high level and detailed interview. They were told that the UFO had had numerous witnesses, and that the base radar had been affected by the UFO during the incident. The army officer in the group said that after he had returned to his unit he was interviewed about the South Coast experience by intelligence officers.

I later interviewed Elizabeth C and the army officer who was with her, and found them to be impressive and compelling witnesses. There seems little doubt that something extraordinary happened, but no official confirmation has been made. I contacted the Navy, which denied all knowledge of the incident.

THE TYRINGHAM – DUNDURRABIN AREA FLAP

One of the more frustrating aspects of researching the UFO phenomenon is its unpredictability. One of the mainstays of the scientific method is the repeatable experiment and observation. In the case of an unpredictable and elusive phenomenon this is rather hard to organise. But occasionally UFO phenomena do occur in specific localities for an extended period. These are referred to as localised 'flaps'.

In the middle of 1973 a remote locality between Armidale and Grafton, around two small timber towns called Tyringham and Dundurrabin, provided me with an opportunity for repeatable observations. It started with locals observing unusual light phenomena and other strange occurrences. Details about the situation came to my notice shortly after they began. I was fortunate that the strange activity persisted for months and knowledge of it remained largely limited to locals and researchers like myself. After several calls from Warwick Ford, a Dorrigo electronics technician, I learnt that nocturnal light activity had first been seen at their 'Mollydale' property, just out of Tyringham, on 29 May 1973. Warwick's wife, Sandra, had noticed 'a very agile object, with very bright flashing lights' (red and blue), which seemed to variously zig-zag or make vertical and horizontal accelerated movements. Sandra, Warwick and their boarder, Jill Cotmore, saw the strange nocturnal light displays on consecutive nights following this first appearance. Others in the area also noticed them. Indeed, on 31 May a Tyringham local, Marwin Copland, managed to photograph the lights. On that night, at least nine adults in four independent groups watched the 'antics' of two very agile lights for over an hour. Marwin succeeded in capturing one light's performances on five photos. During that

time it had moved down obliquely over a large angular distance, on three or four occasions, before disappearing behind the mountain range to the north-east.

I first visited the area on 11 June. By then it was clear that some sort of localised UFO flap was underway. I was busy that day interviewing locals who had witnessed the activity in the area. I again visited the area on 17, 22 and 24 June, and from 19 to 29 August. During that time I learnt that, after discounting several cases of the misinterpretation of normal nocturnal sky phenomena, something quite striking was going on. Over several months I was able to gather information on 44 nocturnal light reports and 23 reports of what seemed to be unexplained aerial objects. There were five reports of probable UFO landings, and 15 reports of possible landings, the latter usually featuring anomalous nocturnal lights going down behind hills or mountains. Other unusual events also occurred, including strange auditory phenomena, interference with electrical clocks, and what seemed to be psychic or paranormal events.

On Saturday 2 June two UFOs were seen by the people at Mollydale at about 11 p.m. in a position over major high power tension lines connecting Armidale and Grafton. These lines run directly across Mollydale. Marwin Copland at Tyringham also witnessed part of this activity. One object joined the other, performing synchronous 'antics', such as horizontal zig-zags, backwards and forwards, and vertical and horizontal accelerations. Then one object moved away from the other, stopped, did a sort of loop-the-loop, then dropped like a stone, lighting up the area behind Boney Mountain with a brilliant blue-white light. The UFO flew horizontally across a substantial part of the sky at high speed, in just one or two seconds, gave the distinct impression to the observers that perhaps it saw something (or its objective), overshot the mark, looped up and back, re-aligned the spot, compensated by moving forward a little, then dropped like a stone as if 'on target'. There is no natural explanation that I have been able to find for such a sighting, by so many people.

Marwin Copland, Jill Cotmore, and Sandra and Warwick Ford drove out behind Boney Mountain, following Sheep Station

Creek Road. When they got close to the assumed landing area, they noticed that their compass was spinning wildly. Spotlights were used to check the immediate area. Nothing was found. They drove on, and the compass returned to normal, so they returned to Tyringham. A subsequent check in the same area indicated no effects on the marine compass used. The majority of subsequent observations were also centred on Boney Mountain. During all my investigations, it was difficult to determine how far behind the mountain this and subsequent 'landings' were being made. Some seemed close, as if on the far side of the mountain itself, while others appeared to be a great distance away.

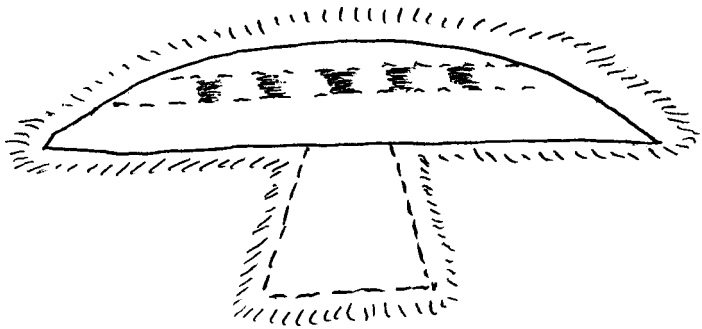
On several nights during that week, the Fords had heard strange droning noises apparently coming up the access road to the farmhouse. The noises sounded like large trucks, making a constant noise. The Fords would go out to look, and although the noise persisted and sounded as if it was approaching, they never saw anything. The road is quite rough and a heavy vehicle would find gear changes a necessity, which would result in a pitch change. None was ever noticed. The sound usually stopped suddenly. The witnesses were quite familiar with regular truck noises, which they often heard travelling along the main road about a mile from the farm house.

The new sounds were christened 'phantom trucks'. They were usually quite obviously emanating from a source either on or quite close to the ground. The area lay in a high altitude aircraft traffic corridor. Some RAAF jets occasionally made low level flyovers, but both these and the high level flights were easily identifiable both by sight and sound. The 'phantom trucks' were distinctly different.

On 8 June at about 9 p.m. a group of six boys, along with Mrs Dorrington, from nearby Dundurrabin, saw a circular object, yellow and red, with alternating red and green lights, following what appeared to be a military jet in a north-west direction. The jet and the object, apparently following only some hundred yards behind, came from the direction of Tyringham. The jet passed over Dundurrabin, apparently oblivious to the object trailing it. The strange object, however, came to a sudden halt over the town, and hovered there for another half an hour. Mrs Dorrington gave

up watching and went inside. The boys claimed that soon after, it started to move and finally disappeared in a westerly direction.

Early on 9 June, before dawn, Dale Dorrington had to go to the toilet, so his mother accompanied him out to the back yard. Together they saw a rotating circular object in the north-west, at about 45 degrees elevation, with flashing red and green lights. A globular, uneven lemon-coloured object extended from the bottom of the object on the end of a yellow 'tongue'. It extended to almost twice the diameter of the main object, for 10 to 15 seconds, then was 'sucked' back into the perfectly circular object again. The main object appeared to have 'spears' of light radiating from its surface. It disappeared.



The Dundurrabin UFO of 25 June 1973, indicating glowing light

On 14 June at about 12.30 a.m. Trevor Butler, a local blacksmith and welder, was driving from Bostobrick to Tyringham. In the north-west sky at about 45 degrees elevation above the roadside forest he saw a large circular object with a green light and a brilliant red rotating light. On top of the object a lemon light was noticeable. Butler drove along slowly following the gently winding, bumpy, gravel road, keeping the object in view. It appeared to keep pace with his car, staying above the trees, to the front and the right. After about 20 minutes Butler had reached

the outskirts of Tyringham. At about two or three hundred metres from his house he pulled over and climbed out and up onto a small hill. By then the object had swung around to the right, putting it over Boney Mountain almost directly to the west. He estimated that the object was hovering over the mountain at about 100 metres above the trees. It then moved down slowly, in a 'pendulum motion', with a constant 'bullroarer-like' noise, which Butler likened to the sound of a flicked ruler vibrating on a hard surface. It disappeared behind the mountain with a small, quivering motion, lighting up a dead tree as it went. The sound quickly diminished, then there was just the almost inaudible sound of the creek, between the witness and the mountain.

On what, from memory, could have been the same night, Mrs Lindout, the Dundurrabin postmistress, heard strange noises at about 2 a.m., which she described as being like a 'very close, heavy helicopter'. At the same time she noticed an eerie 'suspended moon light' coming through her bedroom window. Next morning she noticed that her clock had stopped for half an hour some time during the night. The clock ran by a battery.

Two days later several groups of people driving, at about 6 p.m., made independent observations of a strange object resting on top of the mountain behind the small timber town of Bostobrick, on the road from Tyringham to Dorrigo. The top of the mountain stands at about one thousand metres above sea level. One couple, Sandra Ford and Jill Cotmore were driving to Dorrigo, when they saw a vertically elongated red object on their right, apparently resting on the top of the mountain. At first they surmised that it was a fire, but they soon dismissed this idea. Initially they could only see the bright red thick column of light, but soon six 'squarish' lights were noticed around its base. The bright red elongated top alternately glowed brightly and dimmed, with the base lights continually flashing. Then all the lights went out for about two minutes, then they came back on. The two women watched it for another 10 minutes, until they lost sight of it near North Dorrigo. They continued on their way and, at the top of MacDowell's Hill, near Dorrigo, they saw a yellow oval object, some five times larger than a star, drop out of the sky.

The combination of persistent bad weather during July and

university studies prevented me from investigating this report until late August, when with one of the witnesses, Jill Cotmore, I made the climb to the summit. Once we were on the top of the mountain it was not difficult to see how the object had been seen over a wide area. We found an area that seemed to be consistent with the locality of the object. Evidence of burning was present, but the ambiguous nature of the site and the time that had elapsed made it of limited value.

During March and April, Bill and Dorothy Thompson and their four children started experiencing strange phenomena at their Cockatoo Creek property, just north-east of Billy's Creek. They saw green lights and flashes close to the property, and soon after heard a noise which sounded like a 'humming fridge'. It would last for about 20 minutes, then it would stop, then return. The noise was heard on numerous nights. No source could be determined.

One overcast night, Bill went out once again, to check the humming, and found the cattle and horses moaning and considerably agitated. In contrast, the dogs were bunched up, unusually subdued, in a corner of the house. On the third night, Bill had got out of bed, a little annoyed, to investigate the noise. At the end of the bed, he noticed quite distinctly a volume of cold air. Outside, the air was quite warm. The column of cold air in the bedroom seemed to dissipate with the humming.

The noise was heard over 15 times during the six months up to August. On a number of foggy nights moving green lights were seen, usually in close association with the humming noise. On one occasion a green, diffuse ball of light flashed past the house, disappearing into the fog.

Finally I saw the strange phenomena for myself. Greg Hardy, a fellow university student, and I were at Tyringham with Jill Cotmore on 24 June when we observed some unusual light activity. Other locals joined us and during the evening we observed a number of curious aerial lights. However, it was after 10.30 p.m., when most of the locals had retired, that Greg and I witnessed more striking phenomena. We noticed an unusual glow and a strange, related and changing, light display. We attempted

to get closer, but failing torch light and farm animals passing nearby in the dark encouraged us to return to our car. While I was trying to find fresh batteries for the torch, Greg alerted me to the approach of a strange, repetitive noise. It sounded like very heavy clomping, thudding noises which turned in our direction and came right at us. Greg turned on the car headlights and I used the torch. Nothing could be seen, save a mob of cattle moving away to our far right. I had spent enough time in the area to familiarise myself with the wide range of night noises, particular from cattle, horses, and kangaroos. This noise, so strange that it was unsettling, was unlike anything we had heard before or since. Subsequent searches of the area revealed that the lights we saw were over a thick rain forest area that fell rapidly away into a steep ravine. We could imagine no natural source that would account for the light phenomena we observed.

On about 25 June, members of the Dorrington family, at Dundurrabin, observed a large, disc-shaped UFO for about 15 minutes between 6.30 and 7.00 p.m. It hovered over Boney Mountain. The whole of the object was surrounded by a green glow. There appeared to be a rotating, brilliant red light around the middle of the object. A V-shaped green 'solid' beam seemed to oscillate up and down, more than a dozen times, before retracting into the main object. It disappeared from view, after 15 minutes, by moving straight down behind the mountain. The size estimates pointed out to me on site suggested a very large object.

Many other people reported sightings. On what was probably 18 July a married couple from Dorrigo, with their young daughter, were returning from Sydney via Armidale on a dark and drizzly night. By about 9.30 p.m., they were a few kilometres out of Ebor. Suddenly on the dark road ahead they saw a group of blinking white lights, with light radiating out at all angles. These lights were pulsating in a confused and meaningless sequence. After apparently sitting on the road for about five to ten seconds, the group of lights moved off slowly to the right, then travelled up at an oblique angle, and disappeared over trees on the top of a hill.

At about 7.15 p.m. on 4 August, two teenagers, John Shaw and Noel Boyde, were driving to Deervale, when they saw a cone-shaped light, in the west. On 7 August at about 9 p.m. Marwin Copland at Tyringham stepped out of his house and noticed a huge, brilliant white light over the left-hand ridge of Boney Mountain. Copland raced to call his wife, and together they watched the light for about five minutes. It suddenly 'switched' off, leaving nothing but the orange 'knob' sitting in the sky. It then moved straight down, disappearing behind Boney Mountain in four or five seconds. Riveted, Copland kept on watching the area for almost two hours. He was about to give up watching, when he saw an orange glow developing behind Boney Mountain in the spot the orange 'knob' had earlier disappeared. The glow appeared to build up, slowly moving up. It appeared as if the source of the glow was about to come into view, but then it slowly went down behind the mountain again, with the night sky returning to its normal darkness.

On 19 August I was with a group of people at Dundurrabin, at about 7.20 p.m. We had come to talk to people about UFO sightings in the area. We noticed what I took to be a planet in the sky. However, others saw it rapidly fall behind the mountain. Then, for over five minutes we all witnessed a phenomenon similar to what Marwin Copland saw on 7 August. A glow slowly built up at the point where the 'planet' had dropped down behind the mountain.

I experienced an extraordinary night at Mollydale during the Tyringham flap. On 23 August at about midnight I noticed a bright white light between some trees. The light didn't seem to shimmer or move at all, but at one point, a weak beam of light appeared to extend from the main light, and began to play over the house. It exhibited perceptible flashing, but this could have been attributable to optical effects . Both the light and beam suddenly disappeared. Just after midnight, a dull, silvery object passed overhead, from about the position of the previously observed light, until it was obscured by trees. The object was not a bright light source and did not trail any sort of vapour. It appeared to be a consistent solid body, and seemed to be moving quite a bit faster than the Skylab satellite, which I had seen pass

over on several occasions. A few minutes later, while standing at the wire house gate, I experienced a sensation of cold air about me. I stepped back one metre and the air was warm again. I was soon able to determine that this distinct body of cold air was of a quite definite and rigid confined volume. It had appeared quite suddenly, and after a few minutes dissipated very quickly.

I went to bed at about 12.40 a.m. Ten to 20 minutes after I had gone to sleep at the back of the house, Warwick Ford heard a weird, whirring sound (quite like the 'phantom truck' noises heard already), coming about 400 metres from the house in the direction of the water pump. This was the scene of a sighting by several people of two oblong lights some three weeks earlier. Warwick was about to get me when the noise died away.

Warwick's wife, Sandra, had been a little sick at the time with flu, and early in the night while in bed she experienced some sort of dream impression, the likes of which she had never had before. She had never had any conscious inclination to have such a mental 'impression'. Sandra was half awake, feeling listless, when she 'saw' distinctly a transparent disc containing figures. She estimated the disc to be about three metres in diameter. She thought that the two or more occupants were apparently at work, comfortably inside the transparent disc. Sandra said she first 'saw' the disc near the water tank. It followed the old fence line of the grass, travelling at about three metres above the ground, finally disappearing over the hills. She emphasised that the impression was quite vivid, but thought I wouldn't be interested in her 'dreams'. At about 4 a.m. on the same night I was woken by a constant droning noise, like a plane passing nearby at a low altitude, but with no attendant echo effects.

There is some evidence of earlier unexplained activity in this area, with strange auditory phenomena, like 'the roar of an aeroplane engine or an approaching hurricane', being described as early as 1928.

ENCOUNTERS AT NORAH HEAD

One morning early in February 1973, a man and a woman were in a parked car near the kiosk at Norah Head on the coast of New South Wales. Light rain was falling. The couple's attention was drawn to a street light situated near the kiosk. It was blinking on and off erratically and eventually the light faded out to a faint glow.

Then from just beyond some trees near the kiosk light, a bright golden-coloured ball, as big as a full moon, rose up, then hovered in the air. After a few minutes, it changed colour from gold to orange to deep red. The couple decided to drive closer for a better view, however the car refused to start. Its only response was a very dull illumination from the headlights. This frightened them badly and the couple decided to stay inside the car while they waited to see what would happen next. After several seconds, a number of small, red, glowing balls shot out from the object and travelled obliquely downwards before disappearing behind trees. The object itself then rose slowly and moved away, eventually disappearing from sight. The kiosk light then came back on and the car started up with the first attempt. The vehicle was subsequently checked and nothing was found that could explain the incident. The male witness worked at a local power station. He was told that there had been a unusual drain on power at the time.

The same area was the location for a bizarre encounter involving four teenagers out camping overnight on 8 June 1975. The earlier experience had not yet come to light, but in a curious coincidence, the frightening experience that befell the group also involved a larger object issuing smaller objects. The teenage party consisted of three boys and a girl. They were camping near a gully after a spearfishing trip. The boys went to the gully for wood to make a windbreak for the camp. After preparing a fire and a windbreak, they began noticing strange noises. They flashed their torches around the area. It was then that they noticed a small, illuminated object, about one metre in diameter, emerge from bushes at the side of a track leading into the gully. Eventually two smaller oval objects, with weird 'propeller' or

'worm-like' shapes inside them, emerged from the larger object and approached the group. Within a few moments, further objects had emerged and soon a large number of these smaller objects were 'attacking' the group. Their attention seemed to be principally focused on two of the young men who had gone into the gully. These objects appeared to have 'intelligence' which enabled them to avoid attempts to deflect or spear them.

Despite the obvious terror of the young men, the young woman was unable to see any of the objects. The group's confusion and panic forced them to leave the campsite. They hurried to the local police station but they received little support there. When my investigators were contacted at 2 a.m. that morning, it was noted that the witnesses' stress and fear were palpable. They returned to the scene later that day, but with reluctance.

There is an enduring tradition of observations of small light balls. Reports occur right around the world. They are often referred to as 'ghost lights', and often regional names are given to specific recurring manifestations. The best known in Australia is the Min Min Light, which was first reported around the Boulia district Queensland. The name has become synonymous with similar manifestations throughout Australia. The Min Min Light is many things. First and foremost, it is an enduring part of Australian folklore. Its actual identity is a matter of great debate. The explanation for the light lies in a number of areas, particularly amongst a range of unusual natural phenomena. For example, it has been caused by luminescent insects and long distance mirage effects. It has also been other things over the years. There is no unique explanation for the Min Min Light. Amongst the rich harvest of 'ghost light' reports throughout Australia, there are some that seem inexplicable. The attacking 'ghost light' at Norah Head is one of them.

THE HYNEK VISIT

Dr Allen Hynek, who had acted as astronomy consultant to the United States Air Force UFO study since 1948, came to Australia during 1973 to lecture on astronomy and UFOs and to promote his groundbreaking book, *The UFO Experience—A*

Scientific Inquiry, published in the United States in 1972. His visit was a watershed for both Australia and himself. Dr Hynek was in the best position to determine the scientific merits of the UFO phenomenon. He had consulted for more than 20 years with the US Air Force and had gone from being a sceptic to a scientist who was willing to actively promote the validity of the phenomenon. He championed the need for serious research. His 1972 book was his case for the scientific merit of the UFO phenomenon. It caused a lot of scientists to rethink their position on the subject. By 1973, Dr Hynek lacked an appropriate vehicle for his ongoing research. For years he had quietly encouraged and actively participated in the 'invisible college'. Following his visit and the massive resurgence of UFO activity in America during that year, he brought the 'invisible college' into the open and formed the Centre for UFO Studies. It continues to this day as a focus for serious research into the UFO phenomenon.

NORTH-WEST CAPE

On a narrow peninsula, over one thousand kilometres to the north of the main centres of population in Western Australia, stands a enigmatic monument to the military ethic. It is a remote spot even for a country as vast and thinly populated as Australia. A vast array of antennas and towers stand out in stark contrast to the harsh natural beauty of the surrounding terrain. Rising to a dizzying height of 387 metres is Tower Zero, the central structure of a vast array of satellite and radio communications equipment. Another 12 towers stand in two concentric rings around it. The towers support large spider webs of wire, a Very Low Frequency antenna array covering one thousand acres, the largest facility of its kind in the world. Altogether the base, which consists of three main sites, is spread over 60 kilometres. Collectively the sites function as a window into an extraordinary world that few of us are privy to, the vast and highly secretive world of military intelligence. The site is officially called US Naval Communication Station Harold E. Holt, but is more popularly known as North-West Cape.

In the vast scheme of facilities that make up the worldwide US intelligence gathering network, North-West Cape, with a reported 430 US military staff, plays an important and acutely sensitive role. During the Cold War it was used for communications with US and Australian navy ships, including US nuclear submarines, in the Indian and western Pacific Oceans. It was also used to intercept Soviet communications. It was never very far from the drama and controversy that pivoted around the fears of possible nuclear war between the superpowers.

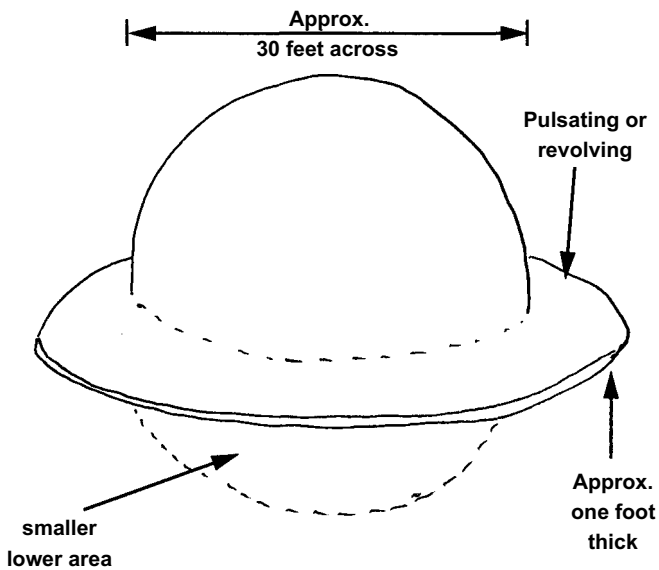
Along with other US bases in Australia, such as Pine Gap and Nurrungar, North-West Cape has long been a matter of acute political sensitivity, specifically related to claims that such sites would be prime nuclear targets during a major outbreak of hostilities between the superpowers. On 11 October 1973, five days after the Middle East War broke out, North-West Cape along with other US bases in Australia was put on full alert. According to Richard Hall, in his book *The Secret State,* this alert status was to escalate dramatically due to 'an NSA misreading of Arabic in a Syrian message to the USSR which led Kissinger and Nixon to believe that Soviet troops might be sent to the Middle East'.

This fiasco climaxed early on the morning of 25 October 1973, in Washington. A full nuclear alert went out to all US forces. North-West Cape was used to communicate the alert to both conventional and nuclear forces in this region. Local time at North-West Cape was around early evening. It was then that an intruder was spotted in the airspace over the base. According to official reports, which do not provide the full names of the personnel involved, at 7.30 p.m. Lieutenant Commander M, of the US Navy, observed 'a large black, airborne object' at a distance of approximately eight kilometres to the west, at an altitude estimated at 600 metres. M was driving from the naval communication station towards the support township of Exmouth, along Murat Road. He reported that the object hovered, with no apparent noise or exhaust, then, 'After about 20–25 seconds the craft accelerated at unbelievable speed and disappeared to the north'.

Back at the base, US Navy Fire Captain L had also seen the

object. At 7.20 p.m. he was driving towards the officers' club when he noticed a large black object in the sky, which he at first took to be a small cloud formation. He got out of his car and stood for several minutes watching the object, which he now saw looked like a black sphere, hovering. The sky was clear and light, and there were no clouds about. The object was about 10 metres in diameter and was about 300 metres above the ground. It was completely stationary except for a halo around its centre, which appeared to be either revolving or pulsating. It suddenly took off at tremendous speed and disappeared in a few seconds.

The Americans investigated the two sightings, naturally concerned in case the UFO was some form of new Soviet aircraft, but apparently no explanation of its true nature was ever found.



North West Cape UFO based on sketch by Fire Captain Bill L

Research into this sighting over the years has failed to elucidate further information about the spherical black object, but it did reveal some interesting facts about the approach of America's National Security Agency to the whole problem of UFOs. In particular, it has been discovered that there is a group of people within the Agency who argued, apparently without success, that a rejection of the reality of UFOs could conceivably harm American security. The American civilian group Citizens Against UFO Secrecy used the Freedom of Information Act to obtain two Agency documents relating to UFOs. The Agency stressed that neither document represents official policy, and that they are draft documents retained only for 'historical reference purposes'.

The first document introduces the concept of what it calls 'surprise material'. UFOs, a phenomenon publicly ridiculed and rejected by science, are described by the author as fitting into the same category as major threatening events which have occurred in history. Examples of 'Blindness to Surprise Material Causing Defect', where people's preconceptions blinded them to urgent threats, include Pearl Harbour, the Maginot Line, and the Normandy Invasion. The suggestion is that UFOs, conceivably, might fall into the same category.

The second document, written in 1968, bears the title 'UFO Hypothesis and Survival Questions' and in part runs as follows.

'It is the purpose of this monograph to consider briefly some of the human survival implications suggested by the various principal hypotheses concerning the nature of the phenomena loosely categorised as UFO.

'1. All UFOs Are Hoaxes. If UFOs, contrary to all indications and expectations, are indeed hoaxes (perhaps) of a world-wide dimension—hoaxes of increasing frequency—then a human mental aberration of alarming proportions would appear to be developing. Such an aberration would seem to have serious implications for nations equipped with nuclear toys—and should require immediate and careful study by scientists.

'2. All UFOs are Hallucinations . . . In spite of all the evidence to the contrary, if UFOs did turn out to be largely illusionary the

psychological implications for man would certainly bring into strong question his ability to distinguish reality from fantasy. The negative effect on man's ability to survive in an increasingly complex world would be considerable—making it imperative that such a growing impairment of the human capacity for rational judgment be subject to immediate and thorough scientific study so that the illness could be controlled before it reaches epidemic proportions.

'3. All UFOs Are Natural Phenomena. If this hypothesis is correct, the capacity of air warning systems to correctly diagnose an attack situation is open to serious question . . .

'4. Some UFOs Are Secret Earth Projects . . . Undoubtedly all UFOs should be carefully scrutinised to ferret out such enemy (or 'friendly') projects. Otherwise a nation faces the very strong possibility of being intimidated by a new secret 'doomsday' weapon.

'5. UFOs Are Related to Intra-terrestrial Intelligence. According to some eminent scientists closely associated with the study of this phenomenon, this hypothesis cannot be disregarded. (The well documented sightings over Washington DC in 1952 strongly support this view). This hypothesis has a number of far-reaching human survival implications: If they discover you, it is an old but hardly invalid rule of thumb, they are your technological superiors . . . The 'inferior' is usually subject to physical conquest.

'6. Comment: Although this paper has hardly exhausted the possible hypotheses related to the UFO phenomena, those mentioned above are the principal ones presently put forward. All of them have serious survival implications. The final answer to this mystery will probably include more than one of the above hypotheses . . . It would seem a little more of this survival attitude is called for in dealing with the UFO problem'.

Howard Blum, a former award-winning journalist for the *New York Times,* has identified the author of these documents as Lambros D. Callimahos, who was an almost legendary figure within the National Security Agency and the field of cryptology. He founded the Dundee Society, a secret society within the

National Security Agency, which proselytised from within that UFOs had probably already visited Earth. According to Blum, since 1972 the NSA has been 'secretly monitoring and often assessing worldwide allegations of UFO activity'.

1975

A nation-wide flap took place during 1975. A spectacular UFO encounter occurred at Lake Sorell in Tasmania during February. Two fisherman, one of them an ex-RAAF officer, witnessed a UFO over the lake. A beam from the UFO, like an enormous cone, illuminated the area for more than one kilometre. After the beam faded, a blue-white luminescent glow persisted. Radio static was also reported during the closest phase of the sighting.

Near Nebo, Queensland, the RAAF investigated a frightening encounter experienced by five people. They were returning from a droving trip on the night of 22 March along the new Mount Flora to Dingo beach road. At about 10.30 p.m., at a point some 90 kilometres from Nebo, the group noticed a strange light among the timber at the side of the road. As they drew closer, the group made out a rather curious object in a gravel storage area just off the road. The object appeared to consist of a row of flashing, dull, white-to-yellow lights, apparently attached to a large 'box-like' mass about one metre above ground level, with a circular mass situated directly above. This sphere, apparently some three metres wide, consisted of several concentric rings of non-flashing bluey-green lights, with a central black disc. Some of the witnesses noticed what appeared to be a 'pole' connecting these two masses and four legs faintly discernible at the base of the complex. The whole object seemed to be about 2.5 metres high and some three metres wide.

As they drew level with the strange object and were bringing the car to a stop, a tremendously loud bang seemed to come from the thing. The noise was likened to a shotgun being fired. The vehicle seemed to shake in response for a moment. The suddenness of sound frightened the group. After the frightening bang, the group drove further down the road. Some of the witnesses

saw that the upper circular mass 'seemed to be watching us', as if 'they were keeping us under observation'. The driver turned the vehicle around and then, once they were level with the object again, stopped. This time there was no loud noise. The two men wanted to get out, but all three girls in the back seat were terrified. They locked the car doors and pummelled the driver with their fists, imploring him to drive away.

The group drove 15 kilometres and stopped at a road camp where they proceeded to describe the frightening spectacle to construction workers. The two men convinced one of the construction workers to accompany them back to the area. The girls were too frightened and waited at the camp. The trio found that the object was no longer at the storage area, but confirmed the presence of unusual indentations at the spot. Then the shaken party made their way home.

Next day they reported the event to the Nebo police. One of the officers accompanied them back to the site. A quote from his report addresses the impact of the experience: 'Whilst at the scene I mentioned to Caroline, aged 12 years, that if we waited for a bit, the UFO might return. The child became quite upset and was obviously frightened. She continued to be disturbed whilst at the location and constantly looked all around as if she expected something to return'.

Caroline's written statement concludes with the following: 'I never want to see one of them again'.

On 25 March, an investigating officer from Townsville RAAF base, and an RAAF photographer, examined the site of the unusual incident. Quoting from the RAAF officer's report: 'The unusual marks on the ground consist of three oval shaped areas; one roughly circular area; and a rectangular area . . . The impact appeared to be very recent with no weathering of the particular areas in question. Some gravel in the areas . . . was freshly fragmented. This was quite obvious as the bright colours of the exposed centres of the gravel stood out among the surrounding weathered stones in the immediate vicinity'.

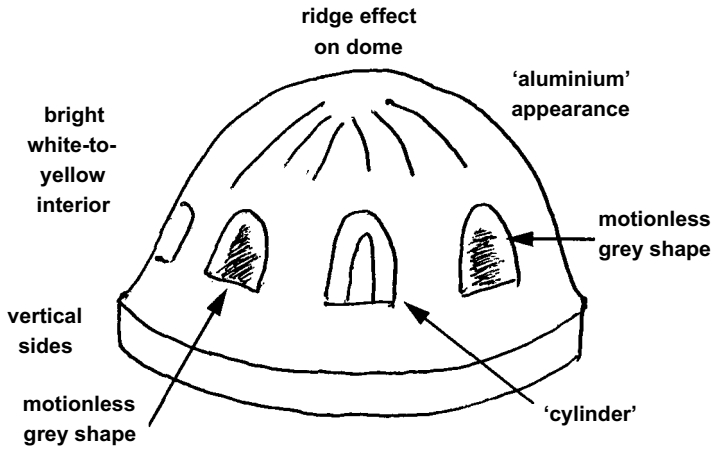
Samples were taken and viewed by a number of Townsville RAAF officers 'and without exception all agreed that the stones appeared to be freshly broken when compared with the weath-

ered sample from the surrounding areas. No test for residual radiation was conducted at the site'. The investigating officer indicated that the impacting had been produced by a heavy weight or pressure. He wrote that he was 'unable to explain the nature of the alleged object, or the cause of the unusual ground markings'.

A remarkable close encounter occurred on 1 November 1975 in the Sydney suburb of Northmead. The frenzied barking of dogs, and a loud, surging wind-like noise followed by a noise likened to something falling through trees and hitting the ground with a thud, announced the presence of a totally inexplicable object. It was about 10 metres in diameter and only some 40 metres away. A married couple ran outside their house to get a better view. They saw the object travelling in a fast arc to the horizon, its path marked out by a 'zig-zag of smoke or light'. The red glow that had flooded the couple's window, and the wind, stopped suddenly. The dogs also stopped barking. Whatever had haunted much of Australia during 1975 demonstrated that its visitations were not just limited to isolated country localities.

THE KETTERING LANDING

In February 1976 in Kettering, Tasmania, a 39 year-old man was woken up by his young child crying. He then noticed what appeared to be a plane coming down from the eastern sky on the shore of Little Oyster Cove. A widespread glow emanated from the area. Thinking it could have been a plane accident, the man hurried towards the light, still in a dressing gown. From a small rise he had an unobstructed view, some 25 metres down the slope, of an extraordinary dome-shaped object. Windows around the object gave off a bright light The exterior looked like aluminium, with ribbing or ridging from the top. Below the windows, a small ledge led into a base, with a short vertical side. Through the three or four windows, the witness saw a tall cylindrical object (which he likened to a ship's compass mounting) and 'motionless grey shapes' (like car seats with headrests seen from the rear), perhaps entities.



Kettering UFO, based on sketch by witness

A humming noise, like an electric motor turning over, could be heard as he drew closer. Then the object rose from the ground, with the noise increasing as it went. It gained elevation slowly, then increased speed. The object became a dot in the sky and was gone. The whole incident lasted about seven minutes.

The witness went back to the spot in the morning and found that the rough grass appeared to be scorched in a circle where the object had rested. This grass later died and was subsequently replaced by a 'tougher cutting grass'. When the Tasmanian UFO Investigation Centre visited the site, the affected area stood out as much greener than the surrounding area. Investigations revealed no significant differences in the thermo-luminescent content of the soil and mineral particles taken from within the affected area and from outside. The results indicated no large doses of ionising radiation.

THE BEN BOYD FILM

At mid-afternoon on 23 October 1976 three young men, Nicholas Flaskas and Frank and Bill Zonaras, were standing on top of a

large cliff overlooking the sea at Taola Point in Ben Boyd National Park on the south coast of New South Wales. They were preparing their cameras for the coming eclipse of the sun, an impressive event for amateur astronomers and one that the three men had been looking forward to for months. Suddenly Bill spotted something over the water and yelled out to the others. They watched a group of elliptical objects which at first were hovering over the water close to their horizon, and then began to move towards and away from the men in an apparently controlled manner.

Frank Zonaras picked it up a movie camera and began to film the phenomenon. 'As I was filming', he recalls, 'I felt amazed that these things should be there at the time we were. It gave me a strange sensation and I knew that people would call us liars and say that we'd faked the film, so I panned the camera to include bits of the land'. The men noticed that there were about five objects, and the closest one was dull grey in colour and shaped like a flattened bell, and seemed to be revolving. It was very clearly defined and Frank and the other two were all adamant about what they had seen. They took some still shots as well, but unfortunately their cameras were not of high quality, and the resulting film and prints, while interesting, are disappointingly indistinct.

The three men actually decided not to show the films to anyone else, for fear of being ridiculed. But two years later Nicholas Flaskas showed the film to UFO researchers. The reluctance of the other two men regarding this course of action, and the awareness of all three that the film is frustratingly blurred, support the opinion of researchers that they did see something unusual over the sea. Computer enhancement techniques confirmed that a UFO had indeed been captured on film.

THE LEITCHVILLE – ECHUCA FLAP

During late 1977 and early 1978 an extended 'flap' was centred in the Leitchville – Echuca area of Victoria. Trace sites were widely reported along with extensive UFO activity but few were ex-

plicitly correlated with UFO landing events. A spectacular 'UFO display' took place near Leitchville on the night of 13 December 1977. Witnesses likened it to signalling activities between a 'parent' object and at least two other objects. On 7 March 1978 in Echuca Village, a married couple, the Gilhams, both 65, were woken up at about 3.30 a.m. by their dogs barking and disturbances amongst the sheep, which had gathered round the house. Mrs Gilham got up and walked past the wash house, to find it all alight. She described in press reports what happened next: 'I saw this huge big light in the paddock. It was a burning, blazing, white light. It did not have a centre, but it was like a great big cobweb. We watched it for about 20 minutes. It was hovering just a bit above the ground. It made my eyes ache . . . It was rather a nightmarish thing . . . a blazing, hovering, cobweb of white light . . . It wobbled, sort of shook. You could not see a tree, just nothing but the light. I ran inside, I got a bit nervous . . . I didn't see it go away, because I ran inside'.

A four centimetre depression was left in the driveway where the light had appeared. The dirt and gravel in the driveway were blown about. After the story broke the next morning, scores of cars converged on the site, making sampling futile. Mrs Gilham also suffered a severe headache for several days after the encounter.

THE GISBORNE UFO FLAP

While this wave was being played out in Victoria, across the Tasman something extraordinary had been unravelling around Gisborne, New Zealand. Like most groups, the recently formed Gisborne Aerial Phenomena Research Group had started off collecting sporadic testimony. All that changed for group member Hamish McLean when he responded to an anonymous call about a UFO landing in the Waimata Valley. Arriving at about 10.15 a.m. 29 November 1977 McLean could at first see nothing unusual. Then he spotted 'a craft shaped like a bowler hat' hovering over a hill about 150 metres away. McLean says he stopped his car and got out. The object allegedly sped towards him, then

stopped and hovered for about three minutes. Its appearance was unusual, to say the least. The top section was a fluorescent pink-red, with two prominent features—a white and purple 'boomerang' shape decorated with unusual symbols, and below it a dark grey rectangular panel. What looked like four hazy cylinders of green light, with helix-like patterns inside, were located under a dark blue, 'metallic' horizontal rim. A bright beam of blue light issued from the craft and illuminated a nearby dead tree trunk which fluoresced Tike a Christmas tree' through a range of colours, stopping when the light beam went out. The UFO moved away, stopped again, then travelled behind the hill, reappearing in its original position. McLean scrambled off to get another group member. By the time they returned, the UFO was gone. A subsequent inspection of the tree trunk showed nothing out of the ordinary, sadly. No reported attempt was made to examine fragments with analytical equipment.

Numerous reports followed, some seemingly of the same object observed by McLean. Activity largely petered out by the end of December 1977. Then there seemed to be a resurgence of activity including a possible abduction episode. On 11 March 1978 three young women had gone to the UFO-haunted Waimata Valley, near Gisborne, for a night of 'UFO watching'. The women recollected a strange, disrupted night. They had been keeping a regular log of the night's observations, and two hours seemed unaccounted for. They thought they had gone to sleep, and were later disturbed by the approach of locals in a car. They hid, concerned about hooligans due the UFO flap. They seemed to have slept again, waking up with one of them feeling that she was being pushed upwards on something. They gathered their gear, aware as they walked toward their car of a sense of presence. At the car they heard a sound like someone walking on gravel in heavy boots. This sound seemed to go around the car, and left one of the women feeling quite panicky. They quickly drove off, disappointed they had not seen any UFOs, but also confused by the strange and surreal events of the night. A young UFO researcher, who had learnt hypnosis from a stage hypnotist, subsequently convinced one of the women to undergo hypnosis to see if anything could be uncovered. In the session, she described

being drawn up a light beam, along with one of her friends. Her next perception was of waking up in a small room. Both she and her friend were on raised horizontal slabs. A normal-looking humanoid figure was present. She described having a long and apparently pleasant conversation with this being, the details of which she would not disclose. She and her friend were then returned to the hillside, where the third member of the party had apparently slept through it all.

Gisborne entity based on sketch by witness

The three women declined further interviews. But the woman who was hypnotised in 1978 contacted UFO researcher Keith Basterfield in 1989. Given the complexity of the affair, the fact that there were apparently three people involved in the incident, and because it had not been followed up in detail at the time, Keith and I collaborated on a detailed retrospective investigation. Our enquiries with the woman, whom I will call Betty, revealed a complex background steeped in paranormal events. We found her to be a forthright and credible witness.

We felt that another hypnosis session with Betty, carried out this time under strict protocols, by a very experienced clinical psychologist, would be worthwhile. I participated in the session, ensuring that the 'three staged technique' was properly carried out. What followed was an extraordinarily powerful session which revealed a set of experiences that approximated the 1978 hypnotic 'recall' and expanded upon it in a revealing way. A brief extract from my rough notes of this regression indicate how potent it was. The session was recorded, but because of the limitations of space, I will restrict myself here to the notes. Here Betty is responding very emotionally to the experience of seeing her sister-in-law being 'examined' by alien beings.

'This guy says he knows me. I don't know him. Jesus Christ! S——— 's asleep! Oh man, that's sick. No way . . . Far out . . . Fucking bastard! Leave her alone! Bloody mongrels. Sticking things into her . . . Far out . . . Yeah, Yeah, Yeah . . . No way! I'm sorry, I don't care. I don't believe you. I'm sorry. You can't do things like that. This is my sister-in-law. Try it with me. Who do you think you are? I don't give a stuff . . . Go jump . . . I'm not getting upset . . . Just leave her alone . . . Guinea pig . . . Mongrels . . . Get your hands off . . . There aren't any marks . . . (Now Betty is very subdued) OK, righto . . . Come on. Its time for us to go, OK . . . Thank you . . . Thanks . . . Right, yeah . . . Bye, Bye'.

UFO SHOOT-OUT AT ST GEORGE

Fourteen year-old Murray Beardmore and two friends were spotlighting for kangaroos on the Beardmore property Rose Hill near St George in Queensland on 29 September 1978. It was about 8.30 p.m. when they saw a light out to the west. Murray, who was driving, stopped the car. The light seemed to be approaching, at about treetop height. Murray turned the car around and slowly drove off, while they all continued to watch the strange light. The UFO appeared to stop and then oscillate, up and down. Alarmed, Murray accelerated the car. The UFO followed, overtaking them and crossing their path. The road they were on was

very straight. They had to stop to open a number of gates. The UFO stopped, approached them and then shot straight up in the air. When they were only about 100 metres from the homestead, the car engine died. The young men got out of the car and decided to shoot the object. Murray told me that the object was now only about 200 metres away. He saw it through the telescopic sight of his .303 rifle. It appeared to be about the size of a fridge, oval in shape with orange-coloured flames coming from beneath it. When he fired, it appeared to move rapidly sideways. Another of the boys also shot at it and the UFO briefly reversed its motion, then zoomed upwards. He fired a second shot. No obvious reaction occurred, but seconds later the object stopped rising and moved away to the west. When Murray arrived home he was so distraught that his father feared one of the young men had been shot. A number of people inside the house came out, and they all confirmed the presence of a strange light in the sky.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF FREDERICK VALENTICH

The extraordinary disappearance of pilot Frederick Valentich over Bass Strait on 21 October 1978 thrust the subject of UFOs into the news headlines around the world. The Valentich mystery has endured as an insoluble enigma. The crux of the mystery is just what happened to the young pilot and his 182 Cessna light aircraft during that October evening. Twenty year-old Frederick Valentich, 47 minutes into what should have been a routine flight from Moorabin, Victoria, to King Island in Bass Strait, reported in a radio conversation with Melbourne Flight Service Unit controller, Steve Robey, seeing an unidentified 'aircraft' near him. The following communications between Valentich and Melbourne took place immediately prior to the disappearance. Radio codes have been omitted from the transcript for ease of reading. The transcript is otherwise complete.

Valentich: Melbourne, this is DSJ [the code for Valentich's plane]. Is there any known traffic below five thousand [feet]?

Melbourne: No known traffic

V: I am, seems to be a large aircraft below five thousand.

M: What type of aircraft is it?

V: I cannot affirm. It is four bright, it seems to me like, landing lights . . . the aircraft has just passed over me at least a thousand feet above.

M: Roger, and it is a large aircraft, confirm.

V: Er, unknown due to speed it's travelling. Is there any air force aircraft in the vicinity?

M: No known aircraft in the vicinity.

V: It's approaching now from due east towards me . . . it seems to me that he's playing some sort of game. He's flying over me two three times at speeds I could not identify.

M: Roger. What is your actual level?

V: My level is four and a half thousand, four five zero.

M: Confirm you cannot identify the aircraft.

V: Affirmative.

M: Roger. Standby.

V: It's not an aircraft it is—

M: Can you describe the, er, aircraft?

V: As it's flying past it's a long shape . . . cannot identify more than that it has such speed . . . before me right now Melbourne

M: Roger, and how large would the, er, object be?

V: It seems like it's stationary. What I'm doing right now is orbiting and the thing is just orbiting on top of me also. It's got a green light and sort of metallic, like it's all shiny on the outside . . . it's just vanished. Would you know what kind of aircraft I've got, is it a type of military aircraft?

M: Confirm the, er, aircraft just vanished.

V: Say again.

M: Is the aircraft still with you?

V: It's, ah, now, now approaching from the south-west. The engine is rough idling I've got it set at twenty-three twenty-four and the thing is coughing.

M: Roger. What are your intentions?

V: My intentions are, ah, to go to King Island, ah, that strange aircraft is hovering on top of me again . . . it is hovering and it's not an aircraft [communication ends].

At 1933 hours when Valentich did not arrive at King Island, an intensive air, sea and land search began and was continued until 25 October 1978, but no trace of the aircraft was ever found. Steve Robey, the radio controller who spoke with Valentich during the last minutes of his life, said in a newspaper interview: 'I think at first he was a little concerned about this other aircraft flying around him, and of course I had to assume that it was another aircraft until it developed and became a little mysterious. Towards the end I think he was definitely concerned for his safety; I considered that he would have had to have been a good actor to have put it all together the way he did'. Robey did not believe he had talked to a disorientated pilot.

Apart from a very early attempt to suggest that Valentich may have been flying upside down, totally disorientated, with lighthouse lights producing his perception of an 'unidentified aircraft', the Australian Department of Aviation has never officially addressed the question of what Valentich may have been observing prior to his disappearance. In November 1982 I was given permission to examine the Department of Aviation UFO files, but was specifically denied access to the Valentich files on the grounds that they were Air Accident Investigation files and not UFO files.

Dr Richard Haines was a research scientist with NASA and an aircraft accident investigator, as well as an active UFO researcher, particularly in cases involving pilot witnesses. He took a particular interest in the Valentich incident. He was given access to the tape of the incident and was not able to definitively identify the unusual sounds that appeared in the final 17 seconds of communication with Valentich. A metallic-like sound is noticeable. Dr Haines found they were similar to the sound produced by the rapid keying of the microphone, but control testing did not confirm this absolutely. Haines published a book based on his study of the affair, *Melbourne Episode—case study of a missing pilot*. He included four hypotheses of what might have happened: pilot disorientation; a hoax; an actual UFO abduction; and a military weapons test. While Haines seems to have favoured the final hypothesis, the evidence for it is slight and speculative.

Many people reported seeing UFOs on the same day and during the night of Valentich's disappearance. Some 15 separate sightings were judged by UFO researchers to be unexplainable. They all occurred between midday and 9 p.m. on 21 October. Six occurred in Victoria, one on King Island, and the rest in New South Wales, Tasmania and South Australia. This was an unusually large number of reports for one day. Some photos taken out over Bass Strait by Roy Manifold, a plumber on holidays at Crayfish Bay on the Victorian coast, some 20 minutes before Valentich began describing his encounter, revealed something unusual. Manifold had taken six photos of the setting sun. He saw nothing untoward, with the camera set to automatically take the photo series, but when they were printed the fourth and sixth photos revealed apparent anomalies. The fourth photo showed what looked like a dense 'black lump' in the water, giving the impression of something rising from the water. The fifth photo appeared normal. The sixth shows a strange mass situated in the sky directly over the position of the anomaly in the fourth photo. It looks like an object caught in flight with a possible exhaust or trail of material. Film faults and processing defects were ruled out. The RAAF suggested a cumulus cloud breaking up, but the timing of the exposures would have required the 'cloud' to have moved into view at an extraordinary speed.

The areas that feature prominently in the Valentich incident—Cape Otway (his last land call), Bass Strait (the apparent location of his disappearance) and King Island (his apparent destination)—all have extensive precedents for UFO activity. So there is much that suggests a UFO connection with the disappearance of Valentich, but unfortunately a final answer eludes us, preventing the comfort of certainty. The incident has inspired dramatic works like the play *Sky* and the bizarre and striking TV miniseries, *Locusts and Wild Honey*. We must remember that a family waits for an answer that so far has never come. I hope that some day they will find that answer.

UFO FALLOUT OVER NEW ZEALAND

During the early hours of 21 December 1978, two separate Safe-Air Argosy cargo planes were making flights between Blenheim, Christchurch and Wellington in New Zealand. Both flights encountered anomalous objects. The most spectacular incident involved the Argosy 2, when 'a bright, flashing, white light, almost like a strobe' passed in front of the plane at a velocity estimated to be 17,000 kilometres per hour. It disappeared after making a sharp right-hand turn. The plane's own weather radar confirmed the existence of the object. Quentin Fogarty, a Melbourne TV Channel 0–10 reporter on holiday with his family in New Zealand, was asked to do a story on the events of 21 December. He hired a local TV crew to accompany a flight from Blenheim to Wellington, and from Wellington to Christchurch, in order to gain background footage for the story. The flight from Blenheim to Wellington was uneventful.

The plane took off from Wellington at 11.46 p.m. Saturday 30 December and travelled out over Cook Strait, reaching a cruising altitude of about 4,000 metres and an airspeed of 215 knots. At a point just south east of Cape Campbell, unusual lights were seen in the direction of Kaikoura. Wellington radar began picking up targets that were in the vicinity of the plane. The first thing the TV crew noticed was four or five unusual lights near the town of Kaikoura. They were variously stationary and moving, and their number kept changing. The cameraman tried to film these lights but he described them as too far away, however he said they were just visible in the blow-ups that were eventually made. Other lights were seen, also recorded by Wellington radar, and at one point the aircraft did a 360 degree turn to confirm the presence of a light which appeared off the right wing. After this manoeuvre, they no longer had visual contact, however Wellington still indicated the presence of an anomalous object in the vicinity. The plane landed at Christchurch at 1.01 a.m.

When the Argosy took off for the final leg back to Blenheim, one member of the film crew refused to continue the flight out of fear of what had happened. A few minutes after takeoff, the

crew observed an anomalous object, likened to a featureless moon, travelling parallel to them. It was also described as a bright yellow white orange light. Captain Startup turned on the plane's own radar and a strong return was obtained. The radar blip gave an estimate of the target size as being three to five times larger than the blip size of a fishing boat. All of those on board had a clear view of the radar screen and the object, and were able to satisfy themselves that the radar target and the object outside the aircraft correlated. The radar distance was initially 30 kilometres, but decreased as the plane reached cruising altitude. The decision was made to turn towards the UFO. It made an abrupt change in course and moved away.

The object was filmed and in Australia Channel 0–10 broadcast the footage on 1 January 1979, and it was briefly a media sensation around the world. Attempts were made by the Royal New Zealand Air Force to explain away the sightings, but these were discredited by meteorologists and other scientists. The mystery remains.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

—the 1980s—

The Gippsland region of Victoria took centre stage during the latter half of 1980 with a puzzling array of events that featured the disappearance of substantial bodies of water. By far the most interesting of these, and certainly one of the most striking 'physical trace' cases to have occurred in Australia, was the UFO landing that took place on 30 September near Rosedale in Victoria. The witness was the caretaker of the property, whom I will call Bill, and the following account uses some of his own words. I found Bill to be a down-to-earth man, fully aware of the absurd-seeming nature of his experience. He does not drink.

Bill lived alone in the farm house. He was awakened by stock disturbances at one in the morning. 'I could hear this unusual hum or buzzing sound, and got up to check the stock. They were tearing around the paddock hollering and bellowing as they went, and the horse was racing around and around too, with her head up in the air. She wouldn't stop, even though I yelled out to her'. The stock became jammed, still bellowing, against a fence, before stampeding across the field. Then out of the corner of his eye Bill spotted an object. His immediate impression was that it

was an aircraft about to crash. Then he realised that it was a domed object with a white top, moving far more slowly than an aeroplane at just over two metres above the ground. Orange and blue lights could be made out on its surface. It was some nine metres in diameter and five metres high.

'I thought, "What the heck is it?"' Bill recalls. 'It wasn't an aircraft'.

He went back inside to change, and when he returned outside the object had moved off and was hovering over a large, open concrete water tank. Bill went towards it and found 'an old cow that was injured in a road accident, she broke a leg. After that she liked to lie down at a particular place in the field, you couldn't make her run if you tried'. Bill found her a long way from her normal place, bellowing and with foam coming out of her mouth. When he chased her away from a gate she went under a shed and stayed there until four the next afternoon.

Bill got on a motorcycle and rode towards the object, which had risen off the tank and landed in a field. He began to experience shock. 'The closer I got the worse I got. It seemed to muck up my arms and I couldn't control the clutch. I just sort of went like a jelly on a plate, a huge big jelly tipped out on a plate'. With difficulty he opened a gate into the field where the object now was, and rode up to within three metres of it. 'I thought, Jeeze, it's a UFO'. He had been hearing a whistling noise. That stopped, and suddenly there was an 'awful scream'. A black tube appeared around the base of the UFO. There was a tremendous roaring noise, accompanied by a higher-pitched scream, and the object lifted up and left the landing site. Bill, who had put his hands over his ears to protect them from the noise, was almost knocked off his bike with the blast of hot air that accompanied lift-off. At this point debris, including stones, weeds and cow dung, fell away from the base of the object, and it was eventually lost to view. Bill rode onto the landing site and confirmed a ring of 'black' flattened grass, some 10 metres across.

Bill was disorientated and in shock. He eventually found his way back to his house, where he lay down on the bed in his clothes. He could not sleep, and just wondered about what had

happened to him. At five o'clock he decided to return to the landing site. 'The closer I got the more trembling I got. I had the real funny feeling come over me again'. But he went on and found the landing ring stood out clearly in the blanket of yellow flowers then in the paddock. It took the cattle until about eight o'clock in the morning to settle down and find their own calves, from which they had become separated during the panic of the night. Bill also found that 10,000 gallons of water that had been in the water tank had vanished. Muddy residue in the middle of the base of the tank was built up in a cone shape to a height of just under one metre. Later that morning a visitor came to the farm and noticed that Bill was disturbed. He told Bill he was looking 'as white as death' and, after Bill showed him the marks on the ground, went away to report the night's events.

'I've never been one to suffer from headaches', Bill later recalled, 'and I've never been one to vomit, but for the next week I was worse than a pregnant woman. Every morning when I had something to eat I'd spew. The headaches would come on about eleven o'clock and last until three. I could swallow a bottle of Aspros but they wouldn't ease it'. When asked if he had any trouble sleeping he replied, 'There was no chance of sleeping, mate'. He was able to doze off from time to time, but suffered from nightmares involving helicopters and aircraft, and would wake up sweating and trembling. This went on for seven or eight days and I was getting really depressed, it wasn't getting any better. I thought I'd better see a doctor because it wasn't like me at all. Then on the last night I had a frightful dream. I was down in the paddock chasing the thing with a double-barrelled shotgun, one of those old guns with hammers on it. I pulled one of the hammers back and must have bounced on the bed really hard, because I woke up and almost landed on the floor. After that I came right'.

When asked several months later how he felt about the experience, Bill said, 'I don't know. Just something that was beautiful. I think I'd feel happier if I'd had a ride on it'.

NOT SO 'ALIEN HONEYCOMB'

The book *Alien Honeycomb—the first solid evidence for UFOs* by John Pinkney and Leonard Ryzman was published during 1980. It professed to tell the story of a UFO explosion near Greenbank, Queensland, after which the authors recovered some of the debris containing 'unknown elements and configurations'. It was greeted with great interest, as all UFO researchers are of course always on the lookout for irrefutable material evidence of UFOs. Unfortunately, the book revealed no details about chemical analyses and the authors resisted any attempt at confirmatory, independent analysis. They were only prepared to have their material examined by the United Nations.

The story that allegedly connects the debris to a UFO is fragmentary and dubious. Pinkney and Ryzman indicated that most of the material was retrieved by RAAF officers, and then clandestinely despatched to Pentagon testing laboratories, but they presented no evidence to back that statement up. The only reference to Alien Honeycomb I found in the RAAF files was in internal memoranda noting: 'The text of the book is sufficiently vague to make tracing information from service records a very tiring and difficult task. A check of files held at Air Force Office has proven negative'.

As an industrial chemist and someone who was promoting serious research into possible physical evidence for UFOs, I was interested in finding out more when the book first appeared. I concluded the material was high strength honeycomb, some of which is made from fibreglass. A researcher working for sceptic Dick Smith received some of the 'alien honeycomb' from the same person who provided the authors with their material. Smith financed an analysis through Unisearch laboratories, and not surprisingly confirmed that the 'alien honeycomb' was non-alien fibreglass.

The next major wave of sightings in Australia occurred in the middle of 1983. There was a spate of nocturnal lights, supported in some cases by photos, around Bendigo and Ballarat, Victoria, during May. A burst of activity including some close encounters

occurred in New South Wales, during June and early July, against a backdrop of questionable radar returns at Sydney airport. The RAAF initiated, with perhaps tongue in cheek, what their UFO files called 'Operation Close Encounter', which led to RAAF aircraft being on standby. They finally concluded the radar reports were probably spurious. The UFO wave of 1983 saw the RAAF being remarkably public in their role of examining UFO sightings, indeed at a level virtually unprecedented in the history of the Australian controversy.

THE MELTON – ROCKBANK UFO SECURITY BREACH

A game of hide and seek, lasting several hours and involving police, occurred at Melton, Victoria, on 22 July 1983. This event caused great consternation in official circles because the Army Signals Unit was alerted that their security had been breached. Constable Raymond Ellens was in a police van with Constable Peter Ferguson, involved in the on and off pursuit of strange intruders. Constable Ellens stated in his official report: 'At about 5.00 a.m. we again sighted the object travelling directly towards our position. Between the object and our position was the Australian Army Rockbank Receiving Station. The object appeared to be travelling directly towards the antenna array. The object appeared to be below the height of the antenna and if it continued on its path a collision would have occurred. However, it turned about and started to arc again to the north. After a few minutes we again lost sight of the object over the far horizon'. Sergeant Barry Harman of Melton police station witnessed the strange craft very close to the station: 'Both Inspector Hickman and myself ran onto the roadway in front of the Melton Police Station, and immediately I looked into the direction of the Regional shopping centre and observed the object. My immediate observation was that of two large round lights, very similar to the lights of a motor car, approaching the police station at a very low altitude. It appeared to be maintaining an even altitude, speed and direction towards the police station . . . As the object passed

by at closer range, I reckoned its shape to be similar to an inflatable life raft approximately 12 metres long. A red flashing light, not rotating, was situated in about the centre of the undercarriage. There were no visible wings or tail similar to an aircraft, nor did it make any sound similar to an aircraft or helicopter. The only sound audible was that of a very quiet wind noise'.

Constable Ferguson gave this description: 'The object then proceeded from over Melton directly towards our position. As it got closer and eventually passed directly overhead we shone the spotlight onto its underside. It was gun-metal grey in colour and had the appearance of a very large rubber raft with two lights set into the front, two white lights on the rear and a red flashing light in the centre. The underside and the side panels were slightly curved. The object was approximately 30 feet in length and was approximately 20 wide. It made a low pitched humming sound and appeared to be travelling at about 70 to 80 kph. The object was approximately 200 feet above us and was illuminated by the spotlight'.

The object had briefly appeared on Tullamarine radar. Later, the policemen lost sight of the object and returned to the station to do paperwork for an hour. When they went out again, in the words of Constable Ray Ellens, 'We went out on patrol towards Bacchus Marsh and we saw it again' hovering over the regional shopping centre. This time it was low, about 60 metres. We got out and shone the spotlight on it to get a good look, and it looked the same as it had before. Then it took off and we continued this cat-and-mouse game of chasing it for several hours. Other units came up and saw the lights too. When it flew low over Melton we told the police station by radio and several officers came outside and saw the craft'.

It was a beautiful clear night with a three-quarter moon. Ellens thinks the first object was a 'gyrocraft', although he admits he cannot explain how it appeared to jump fences during one part of its progress. He has no explanation for the second object. Victorian UFO researcher John Auchettl went out to Melton the next day. There was extensive interest and presence from army, transport and police officials, due to the number of witnesses and the fact that they were police officers. John undertook a detailed

investigation. He still regards it as a very unusual and strange event, particularly because of the apparent 'backing up' of the UFO when a collision seemed imminent with the Rockbank aerial array, the slow speed involved while it seemed to be chasing the police and the curious aspect of the UFO seeming to 'crash land' at one point and seemingly disappear into the ground. John indicated that this was as if the object had been 'absorbed' into the ground. And yet we have clear and unambiguous evidence of a real object, tracked briefly on radar.

The intelligence world was in an uproar because the Rockbank site is an important Australian Signal Intelligence facility, linked with the nearby Watsonia facility which has direct satellite communications with the NSA and CIA.

STRANGE EVENTS IN SUBURBAN PERTH

One of the strangest reports for 1984 deserves some mention. During the early hours of 20 January, two police constables were driving through Midland, a suburb of Perth, when they sighted some strange lights. They were unable to report the sighting as their car radio apparently failed to operate at the time. Meanwhile, their communications HQ was unsuccessfully trying to get through on the malfunctioning radio in order to direct them to the home of Sidney Bell, in nearby Middle Swan, who had reported a UFO sighting. Bell said he saw a conical shaped light, 30 metres high and about six metres wide at the base. Trees in the vicinity were blowing about. There also appeared to be two 'lightning' streaks either side of the 'cone' light display. The phenomenon disappeared with a 'thump'.

Having down-graded their interest in 1984 due to an alleged lack of national security impact, the RAAF still went into a flap when an aircraft with wedge-shaped wings, which startled golfers and trailbike riders at Cunnamulla, in south-west Queensland, was seen. The UFO was described as having no tail, no windows and no apparent sound. One witness reported it had 'beautiful rainbow colours' and 'seemed to zig-zag like it was out of control' for a short time before disappearing. The object

remained unidentified. The matter was raised in the Senate, and it was confirmed that the RAAF had no delta-winged aircraft operating in the area at that time.

THE MERCEDES MYSTERY

At about 9.30 p.m. one night in 1984 a motorist travelling in a new Mercedes car, near Launceston, Northern Tasmania, noticed some lights that seemed to be following him, but took little notice of them. Eventually the lights passed over his car, and a mass of light landed on the road ahead. His own car lights then failed and the motor stopped. Shocked, the driver applied the hand brake and brought the car to a halt. Ahead sat a cigar-shaped object, blocking the road. The witness found it difficult to look at, as it was very glary. The light, which caused his eyes to sting, appeared to be coming from exceptionally bright white lights beneath the object. The rest of the object was grey in colour. The witness estimated it was some five to six metres wide and not much more than two metres high.

The motorist was very frightened by this situation and fled the car, hiding behind a nearby bush. He was sick at this point (and stated he was sick again the following morning). To his astonishment, his car began moving towards the strange object on the road ahead, despite the hand brake being on. The car was allegedly dragged some 10 metres, leaving rubber marks on the road and scuffing the tyres. The witness at first thought all this took some time, but later felt only a few minutes were involved.

Another vehicle approached at this point, a Landcruiser. Its lights also failed, but the motor kept running. The driver thought there must have been an accident. As the second driver went over to offer what help he could, the object on the road ahead lifted off with a high pitched whine, then curved away to the south and disappeared. Before leaving, the driver of the Landcruiser suggested they had better not tell anyone what had occurred. The Mercedes driver returned to his car which started straight away. He noticed that road bitumen, where the object

had been, appeared to have melted. Subsequently, he found some bitumen splattered on the front of the car. He felt this may have occurred through splashing as he drove away from the site. This witness made a phone call as soon as he got home. What surprised him was that the person he was calling complained of the lateness of the hour, around midnight. This puzzled the witness as the drive from the encounter site was only 20 minutes. The Mercedes, which was then 14 months old, began to suffer from electrical problems and some new parts were required. The vehicle was subsequently sold.

The Mercedes driver returned to the site on the next weekend. It looked to him as if the road had been repaired. He decided to report the event and eventually did so to the Victoria UFO Research Society, which in turn gave the witness the contact details for the Tasmanian UFO Investigation Centre. The witness contacted the Centre on 21 December 1987. Only limited confirmation proved possible. The site had had a number of repair areas, the car could not be examined and the Landcruiser driver could not be contacted. The witness claimed to have had some strange dreams. In March 1988 the man claims he was approached in Launceston by three men, who told him not to talk about the incident. He broke off contact with the Centre because of this incident.

THE KNOWLES FAMILY

The Knowles family, Faye and her three sons, Patrick, Sean and Wayne (aged 24, 21 and 18 respectively) had their unique experience while crossing the Nullarbor Plain, on their way to Melbourne, during the early hours of 20 January 1988. At about 4 a.m., the family were between Madura and Mundrabilla. All of them were awake. Sean was driving with Patrick next to him in the front passenger. Wayne and Faye were in the back seat. Sunrise was some time away. A bright light was seen ahead. Mrs. Knowles initially thought it was a truck. Sean thought it was unusual and asked his brother Patrick if it was a ‘spaceship’. Patrick rejected the idea, but

Sean sped up to gain a closer look and satisfy his own curiosity.

The family claim they were then confronted with an extremely bright white light, about 20 metres away, travelling along in front of their moving car. They said it was about one metre wide, and seemed, at times, to block their view of the road ahead. A description of something like a slightly angular egg in an egg cup was given, with a yellow light in the centre.

According to the Knowles, the object, which at first seemed to be either on the ground or immediately above it, began to move back and forth. Sean swerved onto the opposite side of the road to avoid the strange light source, and this nearly caused a collision with a Holden station wagon towing a caravan, coming the other way. The occupants of the Holden have never come forward, in spite of, or maybe because of, all the heavy publicity which the Knowles' experience generated.

The 'object', according to the Knowles, appeared to circle around the right hand side of their car, then seemed to give chase to the second vehicle pulling the caravan. The light was apparently lost to the Knowles' view. They made at least two U-turns during this phase of the experience, initially to pursue the object, and later, as their concerns mounted, to leave the UFO behind. The Knowles had by then gained the impression that it was after them.

Although they did not actually see the object in the immediately ensuing phase, the family nevertheless gained the impression that the UFO had not only returned, but had landed on top of their car. They claimed there was a clunking noise at this point, and that the car seemed to be being pushed down by some heavy weight from above.

By now the Knowles were understandably frightened. The sequence of events that followed, as a consequence, was complicated and difficult to unravel in sequence. The family all thought the car was lifted off the road. They were unable to be certain for how long and how high. Mrs Knowles wound down her window, reached for the roof and then felt something soft, spongy and rubbery. It was hot but did not burn her hand. On retrieving her hand, she found it was covered in black grey dust. This apparent confirmation of something on the roof threw the

family into a state of terror. Patrick wound down his window only to have extensive amounts of black powdery dust come into the car, accompanied by a foul smell, likened to 'dead bodies or something'.

A series of bizarre things were said to have happened at this time. A high-pitched whirring or hissing noise was heard. The two dogs in the car started going crazy. The family felt disorientated and noticed that their voices had become slow and deep. They felt as if they were going crazy, and that they were going to die. Patrick felt as if the UFO was taking over his body and that he was going out of his head, as if his brain 'was being sucked out'. Mrs Knowles said it was like 'something was going into our heads'.

At some point the family felt the car was either dropped or forced down onto the road, at which point the rear right tyre burst. Sean applied the brakes heavily and brought the car to a halt and then blacked out. The family report that they fled the car and hid behind roadside bushes. They stated that the UFO remained in the vicinity of their car for a while, then it seemed to take off again. The family remained hidden for some 15 minutes, before returning to the car, hurriedly changing the tyre, putting the damaged tyre in the boot and then driving away from the site.

It was while they were at this site, some 40 kilometres west of Mundrabilla, that they attempted to wave down a truck that drove past heading to Mundrabilla. The truck carried a woman named Anne, who was driving, and John De Jong, who was sleeping. Anne roused John to see if she should, stop, but John said no, as he felt it was unwise to stop for any strangers on the Nullarbor. Neither of them had seen any unusual lights.

Unknown to them, or to the Knowles, John De Jong's friend Graham Henley, who was driving ahead of them in another truck (closer to Mundrabilla, at about 4 a.m.) said he had seen a strange light behind him, in his rear vision mirror. He described it as like 'a very high powered spotlight', 'like a big fried egg hung upside down'. He saw this for five minutes. He believed it was too high up to be another vehicle following him. Contrary to media reports, he did not see any vehicle headlights beneath this unu-

sual light. Henley continued onto Mundrabilla, reaching there at about 4.30 a.m. local time.

Further back along the road, De Jong's truck was overtaken by a speeding vehicle. It switched its lights off some distance ahead. In that car were the terrified Knowles family speeding towards Mundrabilla.

Shortly after Graham Henley arrived, he saw the Knowles' blue 1984 Ford pull in. He was confronted by four very frightened people, all trying to talk at once. One said they had been burnt, another that they had been grabbed by a flying saucer, and yet another, that they had been picked up and dropped. One of the boys could only open and close his mouth, and only a garbled sound came out. Graham Henley offered to put the car in his empty refrigerator van and drive them to where they wanted to go, such was their terror, but they declined.

Graham looked over the car, and confirmed the presence of black ash over various points (bottom of wiper blades, back of slight spoiler built into the back boot of the car, and on the back window). He told me that the material was everywhere both inside and outside the vehicle. He likened it to 'silicon-type sand. Very, very fine, almost like ground glass . . . fine and dry and it was black, and had this horrible [burnt] smell about it'. Henley said he was very experienced with racing cars, and had been on the road since 1957, and felt he could tell the difference between brake dust and the silicon-like dust he saw and handled on the Knowles' car. He likened it to the 'bulldust' that built up on vehicles in the old days of crossing the Nullarbor on a dirt surface. He confirmed the presence of four indentations on top of the car and of the damaged tyre. 'It was the most unusual burst tyre I had seen in my life', he said.

De Jong and Anne arrived just before the Knowles left. They confirmed the frightened state of the family. The Knowles desperately wanted to leave the area, doing so just as the first pink of daylight started to appear. Henley, De Jong and Anne spent some time at Mundrabilla after the Knowles had left. Ostensibly they were the first people back to the site of the encounter. They felt the physical evidence they saw there (skid marks, footprints, tread tracks, etc.) confirmed the Knowles' account of their move-

ments. Henley and his friends advised the police at Eucla of what had happened.

By the time the Knowles got to Ceduna, the story had preceded them, and police were waiting. They were interviewed by Sergeant Jim Furnell and by a forensic police officer from the Port Lincoln Crime Scene Section visiting the station at Ceduna. Their investigations confirmed the family was in a state of great anxiety 'and were visibly shaken by the ordeal'. The police confirmed 'that there were superficial dents to the four corners of the hood although the remainder of the hood appeared undamaged. The exterior of the vehicle was covered by a fine black/grey dust similar to a road film left on a vehicle in need of washing. That same dust was obvious on the upholstery within the vehicle'.

Sergeant Furnell contacted Ray Brooke, of UFO Research (SA), on 20 January, while the Knowles were still present at the Ceduna Police Station. Arrangements were made for the Knowles to proceed to Adelaide for further investigation by UFO Research (SA). Forensic samples of the dust were taken, along with statements. Ray Brooke brought Keith Basterfield of UFO Research Australia into the investigation. Keith contacted me later that same day. It looked like an extraordinary close encounter with possible physical evidence available for a scientific investigation. The apparent traumatic nature of the event for the witnesses would require that the wellbeing of the family would need to be the first priority of the UFO investigation then unfolding. Unfortunately things did not quite turn out that way.

Channel 7 in Adelaide got wind of the story from police in Adelaide. The TV station's chief of staff Frank Pangallo contacted a former colleague, Paul Jackson, who ran the Eyre Highway Motel at Wudinna. When the Knowles family reached Wudinna late on the afternoon of 20 January, Jackson was sitting outside the motel waiting. He convinced the Knowles of the importance of telling their story. He confirmed that the family were very frightened and certainly not interested in money. They just wanted to get away. Jackson managed to get them to wait for the Channel 7 team, only because Mrs Knowles was concerned for others who might encounter the light back on the

Nullarbor. By morning, the story was national news and was breaking internationally. Channel 7 tied the Knowles up for an exclusive, paying them a modest $5,000 for their troubles. The rest is history. If the Knowles had known what they were going to encounter as they entered the media gauntlet, it is doubtful they would ever have gone public.

In this way, a prompt scientific investigation, with the well-being of the Knowles in mind, was supplanted by chequebook journalism. Ray Brooke and Keith Basterfield had to negotiate with Channel 7 to be able to talk with the Knowles on 21 January, all the time competing with the media circus that surrounded them. Channel 7 commissioned a laboratory to examine the car. They concluded that the dust samples they took, significantly from around the front wheels of the car, were indeed consistent with brake dust, and that 'no significant dust was observed on the vehicle as presented for inspection'. Channel 7 prevented access to the car by UFO investigators, until UFO researchers Paul Norman, Ray Brooke and Keith Basterfield were separately able to examine it. Norman vacuumed the vehicle in order to take samples. Brooke and Basterfield felt the car presented as it had done to the lab analyst, with no significant external and internal dust beyond typical road debris. Norman passed samples onto Dr Richard Haines, a NASA scientist with a personal interest in UFOs. His analyses included arranging for scanning electron microscope analyses. He concluded that the dust Norman had taken from inside the Knowles car was different to samples from around the wheels. It was not consistent with brake dust, but neither were there unusual elements present. Further tests on different samples by different analysts provided little in the way of evidence of anything alien or unusual.

There was also a number of other UFO reports in the area of the Knowles experience. They lend some weight to the possibility that something unusual might have occurred. Ultimately, however, we have a situation where the Knowles witnessed an as yet unexplained light, experienced severe fright and reported some extraordinary effects. So far there is no compelling physical evidence in the form of dust and damage to the car that explicitly supports the possible exotic nature of the Mundrabilla

incident. We are left with a fascinating story and puzzled witnesses, who are no closer to a clear understanding of what happened that night on the Nullarbor Plain.

CHURCHILL PARK

In Endeavour Hills, Victoria, on 9 October 1989 two women in a car observed an orange-red UFO situated off the road but on the ground and amongst trees. They lost sight of it and as they passed under high power transmission power lines, it was seen again, this time starting to climb in altitude, up and over the power lines, then crossing over the car as it passed over the road. It then flew away at high speed. Victorian UFO investigator John Auchettl first started looking for any possible traces three days later. On 17 October, a single four metre ring was found at the bottom of the hill near the road. The surrounding ring was about 10 centimetres wide and four holes were present within the ring. Testing suggested that the yellowed grass in the ring was caused by 'intense or massive amounts of UV radiation'.

During December 1989, the farming property of Nancee and Max Jolly, near Speed, in the Mallee district of Victoria, was the site for the discovery of an array of 12 swirled and flattened wheat circles, varying from 1.2 metres to 3.6 metres. The property became the focus of 'crop circle phenomena', including multiple ground ring and 'air ring' phenomena.

CHAPTER TWELVE

—abductions—

For the first time a number of people claiming to have had abduction experiences had the courage to come forward and appear on a public stage at the international Mutual UFO Network conference at Washington DC in June 1987. Publicity surrounding this event, together with that year's best-selling books, *Communion* by Whitley Strieber and *Intruders* by Budd Hopkins, pushed the abduction debate into the public consciousness. Today it is probably fair to say that abduction stories dominate popular perceptions of the UFO scene. Television shows such as *The X-Files* would suggest this is the case.

SOME EARLY AUSTRALIAN 'ABDUCTION' CASES

What I refer to as the Canberra 'snails' story occurred in about 1974, and was a bizarre affair involving witness 'control' and possible 'abduction' with severe physiological effects. Like many, although not all, abduction stories, the absence of physical evidence or several independent witnesses creates doubts. One has to ask whether such accounts tell us more about the human imagination than about UFOs. But judge for yourself.

I heard the snails story from a friend of Heather, one of the two witnesses in the case. I was never able to confirm the experience with Heather herself because of a severe speech impediment that developed every time she was asked to talk about the incident. As it was described, in about 1974 the two young women were relaxing in their Canberra residence. They heard a strange, entrancing sound and felt 'compelled' to go outside and get in their car. The car then 'drove itself', being escorted all the way to a remote site by a brilliant aerial light source. Upon stopping, a weird chant started up, apparently emanating from behind the car. The girls could make out vague human forms there. At this point both girls were overwhelmed by their greatest personal fears. For one it was of sudden and imminent death and for the other it was of being violently raped. Then for some reason, obviously beyond her own volition, Heather got out of the car. What immediately followed is unclear, but for a few minutes she was unable to get back into the car. What prevented her was the presence of a viscous, sticky, white material like spider web all over the door. Eventually she was able to get back into the car and whatever 'control' was exerted over the couple and the car disappeared, and in an understandably disturbed state they made their way to the local police. The police seem to have believed at least part of the girls' strange tale, perhaps because police patrols had observed strange lights in the sky, and one patrol had come across a massive procession of snails crossing the road and heading in the general direction of the site of the strange encounter. They returned to the site of the frightening encounter, but when nothing unusual was found the police escorted the girls back to their home.

Things did not end there. After the police left, the girls went back over the whole sequence of bizarre events, and found that their fear had been replaced by guilt, because they had 'betrayed a trust' by informing the police of the experience. As I have already noted, Heather developed a severe speech impediment and lost certain basic skills, such as writing. The friend, who had apparently stayed in the car, suffered no adverse effects other than fright. By 1976 Heather had recovered from most of the ailments she had experienced after the nocturnal encounter.

Some confronting cases are described by UFO researcher Colin Norris. Colin Norris' contribution to Australian ufology has been colourful and controversial. But some of the cases he has been associated with have been independently confirmed. One example was the experience of Jack and Don, in early 1979, at Nildottie, South Australia. They ran a mail run. For some time they had been experiencing problems with their TV antenna being twisted around. The cause puzzled them. One evening after they had cooked their meal, the Venetian blinds went up and down. They went outside to look and were approached by European-looking people. They appeared to be wearing woollen jumpers. There were both males and females. A torch light shone on them made the two men feel calm. They were taken over to a mound of gravel adjacent to which a craft was located. The men were taken inside. It was cold and the beings apparently agreed to escort them back to the house to get jumpers. They were not allowed to take food. Then the whole group returned to the UFO and it took off. As it rose they saw the TV antenna on the house below twist round. They could see across the Murray River as they rose up. Don, the younger of the two, was given strange, repetitive tests. Seven hours later, they were returned. When a neighbour visited and found them confused and carrying on, police were called in. The two men were taken to Meadows hospital. When they came out with their strange story, Colin Norris was called in. They seemed to be suffering from yellow jaundice and eye problems. Both men passed away within two years of the encounter.

During January 1974, Ben, a 38 year-old man, was out searching for fossils in the remote Clifton Bore area of the Sturts Stony Desert, with a female companion. Ben told the woman to stay near the car, because she was unfamiliar with the area, while he searched wider afield. During the afternoon, when he was about two kilometres from the car, he was suddenly approached by two beings, who were only about one metre in height. They were human-looking in many respects, with short hair, but with elongated heads at the rear. The length of their arms seemed much shorter than usual. Their faces were normal but they spoke in a rapid, unintelligible fashion. They were wearing silver suits. They beckoned him to follow, and they came to a silver-coloured 'hot-

dog roll-shaped' object, about eight metres long and two metres high. Ben could not understand how he had not seen this object before. The beings beckoned him to enter and he bent down to do so. While small from the outside, inside it was vast. He said that inside the object, space meant nothing. There were many more similar beings inside, apparently female. Ben was offered a drink. Frightened to refuse, he did so and passed out. When he regained consciousness he was lying on the floor of the craft. The two beings were still with him. He gained a sense of having been rejected for some purpose, and felt ignored. He was very disturbed by what he saw next. Two Caucasian-looking girls, apparently human, dressed normally, perhaps aged about nine and 12, were in something like a cage. They seemed to be in a trance. Ben found this situation very upsetting. Presently, the open doorway appeared again and he stepped out. He found himself on the desert ground again and simply walked away. Back at the car and with his companion, he discovered an hour and a half had gone by. He was very unsettled by this bizarre experience, and very troubled by the presence of the two girls.

This troubling vision of human children inside UFOs is not unique. One case investigated by Australian UFO researcher Keith Basterfield involved a woman in Karoonda, South Australia, who experienced some sort of 'time loss' in her own house during 1977. She had a sense of being in a strange room with a large number of normal people. She saw a young girl, who was perhaps 10 years old. This girl said her younger brother and sister were also with her. She enjoyed being with people in another room who were in period costume. The woman asked if the girl wanted to go with her, but she said her time was nearly up. Her name was Ama. In 1989 the woman had another 'missing time' episode, again in her house. After travelling through a strange tunnel she found herself in the same room she had been in 12 years earlier. This time there were no humans present. A number of strange alien beings were there. She called them 'greys'. Some were carrying babies or tiny replicas of themselves. One in particular seemed like a focal point. This being did not speak. The baby had its arms out and the woman asked to hold it. The being took it back. This bizarre 'baby presentation' element is a fea-

ture of a number of abduction episodes from the United States, particularly after Budd Hopkin's book on this theme came out. The woman said she had not read either Hopkins' or Strieber's book.

The appearance of the aliens encountered by people I have talked to varies. Descriptions include 'vague human forms', little beings with thin wispy hair, beings 1.3 metres tall with slanted eyes, 'European-looking people' in 'jumpers', one metre tall humanoids with 'beehive' heads, and of course, the 'greys'. There is quite a variety.

VISITORS IN THE COUNTRY

In 1976, a woman in her early thirties in rural New South Wales had a strange experience. She was doing housework at about midday when she was suddenly overcome by a feeling of sickness and general faintness. She felt she would just steady herself by sitting down on her lounge. Suddenly she noticed three strange figures in front of her. One being was about one and a half metres tall, and the woman understood her to be female. She was very slender with a very elongated face. The other two beings, instinctively understood to be male, were much shorter. They had chubby, broader faces. All three figures had large eyes, and the slightest hint of what may have been noses and mouths. Each had shroud-like cloaks. The taller figure was in black and the two smaller ones were in brown. All had wispy bits of hair on the back of their heads. The taller figure began to communicate with the woman, not verbally, but apparently through the mind, telling her that she had to go with them, but the woman refused. Eventually the 'female' figure indicated the woman could go. The woman got up from the couch and began to crawl towards the front door, but with difficulty and in slow motion. When the woman reached the front door, the beings pulled her back 'with their minds'. They continued to tell the woman that she had to go with them. Again she crawled up the hallway. This time her husband appeared to be there. The woman clung to him desperately. She had a strong recollection of the smell of the pure wool

jumper he was wearing. The beings, however, just tore her out of his arms and pulled her back to the couch again 'by force of mind'. They said she would go with them and it was useless to fight.

The next thing the woman remembered was hearing her husband's car pulling up out front. He came into the house. The 'visitors' were gone. Eventually she was reassured that it really was her husband this time. More than five hours had passed, of which only about one hour at the beginning could be recollected. The woman was most disturbed by the thought that her two young children were outside in the backyard playing throughout all of this. They were unaware of what had happened.

Years later, the woman was advised by her sister to read Whitley Strieber's book *Communion* because of the similarity of what she had experienced years earlier to incidents in the book. Although the figure shown on the cover of *Communion* was not quite the same, the woman was prompted to write to the author. Whitley Strieber came to Australia in October 1988 and met the woman. In his next book, *Transformation,* he wrote that the woman's experience was 'the best description of the grey beings' he had received. Strieber again referred to this experience in his recent book, *Breakthrough.* He suggests that the noise of the woman's vacuum cleaner may have somehow prevented the disabling 'sonic attack' often used to render people unconscious, thereby allowing her a clear and conscious awareness of the beings' presence.

WINIFRED CRAUSE, PSYCHIC AND ABDUCTEE

In 1990 Winifred Crause claimed she was abducted from her home at The Entrance, New South Wales. When I interviewed her she told me the following story.

'I was in bed. I didn't know if I was dreaming or what it was, but suddenly I was absolutely petrified. I had never been so afraid in all my life. I was shaking my husband, and in my mind's eye I could see outside, like in the lounge room, on the balcony . . . We were in flats, but they were up on stilts and we had the cars

underneath. And I could see them all around . . . shortish creatures they were. I was absolutely beside myself.

'My husband said, "I want to get up and go out". I said, "No, you mustn't move. Stay with me". What had happened was that I was taken up. I was in this place . It was like there were people sitting around. It was all very clinical. They were in a semi-trance state, if you like. They had me on a bed. It was like . . . a proper medical aluminium bed. They were sort of pummelling me. They had slanted eyes and wore silver outfits . . . They were communicating to one another with this strange sound.

'They treated me as if I was a bug on the table. That's all, as though I was just a bug. They were pummelling my stomach and everything, and I was saying, "Well, you don't have to be so cruel. You know, can't we be friends sort of thing".

'They just didn't take any notice of me at all, and I was really terribly upset. And then in the next minute I was back in my bed, and that was when I thought, "Oh, I've dreamt it". But I could not have dreamt it. It was just so terrible an experience.

'Later on we moved round to Toukley, where I come from originally. We had a house on the water. Early in January 1974 I was looking across the water with my son, when suddenly in the distance this light came up with a sort of big glow. It came across the sky and sort of hovered there a long way in the distance. Suddenly it just sort of flashed and disappeared . . . My son, a very dramatic child five years old, ran screaming through the house, "It's a flying saucer! It's a flying saucer!" And he was absolutely terrified. Later on my husband came home. He's a musician and he had been working very late. He came home at about one o'clock in the morning and we were standing at the window looking out over the water and I was describing to him what I had seen. And, true as God, exactly the same thing happened in the distance over The Entrance. It came up, and it just glowed very brightly and disappeared. We just couldn't believe it'.

I am an advocate of careful, serious and thorough enquiry into such experiences. Until such investigations and support become the norm rather than the exception, abduction experiences will continue to be the provence of a marginalised fringe controversy. Kelly Cahill and others like her deserve better than the polarised extremes we have now of uncritical belief and ignorant scepticism.

Alien abductions may yet prove to be remarkable testimony to the eccentricities of man – that is, these experiences may spring from the realm of the hoaxer, the deluded and the alienated of our society. And yet the possibility that it may just be about something truly extraordinary demands we keep an open mind and keep the matter properly in question, until we have enough information to properly determine what is going on. Fortunately the number of intelligent and qualified people now looking into the UFO abduction mystery is growing.

The victims of these experiences must not be unrealistically encouraged by advocates of alien presence, nor, at the other extreme, should they be ridiculed by the sceptical among us. They should be helped to confront the reality of their experiences, whether or not it is eventually found to be prosaic, profound, or extraordinary. Only time will tell whether the search for answers will give us more insights into the human mind or into the UFO phenomenon. Could it be that it will do both?

The UFO abduction mystery more than any other part of the UFO mystery brings us into direct confrontation with the human dimensions of the UFO problems. Here it is at its most intimate level with human beings. However the evidence for a physical reality behind UFO abductions is not as compelling as the so called mainstream UFO phenomenon, and yet we have the extraordinary problem that it is the abduction phenomenon that is now defining the UFO phenomenon. The UFO phenomenon itself has been abducted by the alien abduction phenomenon. Until we have gained a much greater certainty with the abduction data, it should not define our central understanding of the UFO mystery. We are a great deal more certain about the physical dimensions of the mainstream UFO phenomenon. Let us not

abandon the firm foundations developed over decades for the extraordinary uncertainties and fantastic claims that dominate the field today. We need to learn from history. If we don't we will be condemned to relive it and the UFO phenomenon will be condemned to stay in the marginalised fringe shadow it is now struggling to emerge from.

A variety of approaches has emerged to address the abduction phenomenon in recent years. One of the most notable has been the UFO Experience Support Association based in Sydney. It emerged out of frustrations with the formal UFO group structure. It describes itself as 'a non-profit, voluntary organisation dedicated to helping witnesses and experiences of UFO events cope with and understand their encounters'. The coordinator, Peter Khoury, described the experience that drives his support efforts in the following account.

'On 12 July 1988 I had an experience which changed my life. While lying on my bed, I felt something grab my ankles. As I felt this, a strange numbness, tingling and churning sensation crawled up through my body and right up to my head. I was paralysed, I could not move any part of my body but for the exception of my eyes which I could move, open or close. My brain was functioning but I could not do anything physically. I tried to call out to family members but I could not force the words out. At this stage I started to panic thinking I would not walk again. I thought I was truly paralysed.

'All of a sudden looked to my right side and I could see three or four figures wearing dark robes with hoods on their heads. Their faces were very wrinkled and shiny dark black in colour. They were only about three to four feet in height. It was then that communication was made telepathically. There was no sound made yet I could hear the message in my mind. I was told not to worry and I would not be harmed and to relax. As I moved my eyes and looked to the left side I noticed two beings who looked so different to the others. These two were thin, tall with big black eyes and a narrow chin. They were goldish-yellow in colour. The one closest to my head communicated with me telepathically, telling me not to worry, it would be like the last time. He

looked at me with those big black eyes and I could feel the emotion through them. It was the eyes that expressed these feelings. You could see the smile in the eyes.

'It was at this stage that I noticed a long needle-like flexible crystal tube. The being then pointed the needle to the top left side of my head and inserted it. It was then that I blanked out. The next thing I remember I was conscious. I jumped out of bed like a flash, I walked into the TV room where my dad and brother were. I noticed they were asleep. I woke my brother up—he looked dazed and lost. As he put it he felt switched off. I asked him how long it had been since I went to my room. He replied about 10 minutes, which was how long I thought it had been. When I left the TV room a film was just starting yet as I spoke to my brother we realised that the TV station was closed and at least one to two hours had passed by. 'The next day I spoke to my (fiancee) Vivian. I explained to her what had happened through the night. As I touched the spot where the needle was inserted I discovered some dried blood under my finger nail. Vivian took a closer look and noticed a puncture hole and blood. I went to my family doctor and asked for a check up.

'When I tried to explain [to others] what had happened I was laughed at. I had no where to go for help, no one to discuss the incident with. It was frustrating to experience something so bizarre, so strange, yet so real. I ask you all to think about the situation abductees are in. What if you became a victim of the same circumstances? . . . I ask you once again to be open minded to the fact that there are many individuals experiencing this phenomenon throughout the world'.

MEN IN BLACK

In 1992 I received a phone call from a woman concerned for her her 22 years old husband, Greg. He reluctantly told me that he had had a lifelong experience of UFOs and abductions. The night before he had seen two men wearing long black coats standing in the front yard of their country home. Suddenly the men disappeared. Greg told me that he had first made contact with the 'men in black' at the age of five, when his father died. They were kind, helpful

people. At the age of 12 he began to find himself on occasion in a strange room, apparently on board a spacecraft. He had no idea how he got there or how he got back. Later the men in black made arrangements with him in advance, for him to meet them at certain places in the bush where he would be again taken on board a spacecraft. At the age of 14 he met, on board a craft, his first non-humanoid aliens, much smaller than the men in black. They were also less friendly. Greg claims he saw other human beings on board the craft and that some were being subjected to treatment that caused them pain. He began to fear for his own wellbeing, and worried that he was being groomed to become a man in black, his job to lure other humans on board the craft. He formed the impression that the Pine Gap secret base in the Northern Territory was connected with all this activity. He decided not to continue his relationship with the men in black, as he feared for his safety, and said that as a result of this they became aggressive. Three days after his wife contacted me, Greg and she saw three more men in black in the paddock next to their house. Again, they disappeared suddenly. Three days later Greg was outside when he was knocked over by an unexplained explosion, accompanied by a flash, which left behind it a burning hole in the ground. Greg believed he was being threatened in order to convince him to restart his relationship with the aliens.

A WEIRD NIGHT AT KIAMA

The following incident happened at Kiama on the New South Wales south coast in the early 1970s. The reporting witness, whom I will call Graham, is troubled by what occurred and now feels more comfortable thinking of it as a dream. Yet there are aspects which suggest the presence of a UFO. I found Graham to be a compelling witness, and have here quoted from his own prepared statement.

'I was awoken by a light coming into the room . . . suddenly I saw a light beam, white in colour, with a blue fluorescent tinge evaporating from it. Because of the luminescence of the light I

was able to make out the shape of a flying craft from which the beam projected at an angle to the ground of about 75 degrees. The beam was about 30 feet long and about two feet six inches in diameter . . . [I looked out the window and saw] it hit a caravan. Upon impact the light behaved like water, pouring over the caravan, over its roof, over its walls, over every nook and cranny of the van . . . It reached the beach and illuminated an area of sand about 40 feet at its widest. Inside the lighted area were two men standing motionless looking up at the craft. A young woman jumped up from a small fire and ran to stand with the two men. A second young woman was running backwards trying to brush the light off her arms and body . . . The light suddenly went out and I looked for the people. Has it taken the people, I thought'.

Graham blacked out. On coming to: 'I looked outside the window only feet away. The craft hovered over the street in front of the house. It manoeuvred very close to the window . . . The metallic material it was made of appeared as though it was unpolished zinc alloy. I looked at a window shape about six feet wide and two feet six inches high. A man walked into the room of the craft and stood in front of the window. As he walked in he was looking at a flat object he was holding in his hands, like a clipboard but thicker . . . Another man then entered the room looking at the other man and what he was doing . . . They had bright silver one-piece suits like thin wetsuits on, with no badges or markings . . . The last one to enter the room smiled at the other, then they both smiled directly at me. I had physical fright, my hair stood on end literally and I knew what it meant to be really scared. I dropped to the floor and said, "Everybody keep down. Stay out of the light". . . . Suddenly great noise and severe vibration of the house took place. The laundry light went dim, the fridge began jumping about and there was great noise above the roof . . . It was like the craft overhead sucked the electricity out of the house, then took off'.

The extraordinary behaviour of the light beams behaving as both 'solid' and 'liquid' has been reported elsewhere in Australia and overseas. This is clearly a case that would benefit from further enquiry. If any reader has any pertinent information to this or other episodes like it, please contact me. (See Appendix B for contact details).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

—the 1990s—

The *Coonabarabran Times* in its 17 November 1994 issue carried brief details of an apparent close encounter with a diamond-shaped UFO near ground level two days earlier, on the Mendooran Road. With the assistance of local police, my associate Rob Tilley and I interviewed the four principal witnesses. On the information supplied to date no apparent explanation can be offered for this striking case.

It was initially seen as a large light hovering over the nearby road. An approaching car seems to have made the object move away and approach the farm house, where four adults observed it. At its closest point all witnesses described it as diamond-shaped with lights around the edges, with window-like structures within the body. There was a very bright yellow light inside. It appeared to be a tree's height and of massive dimensions. As the four adults left the house verandah to go closer to the silent object which seemed to be only 300 metres away and slowly passing alongside the house area, it accelerated at a phenomenal speed. It disappeared in the distance. It was at this point that a tremendous high-pitched engine noise was heard, almost like a sonic wave. This was noticed after the object had passed by.

Neighbours also saw the 15 November object. At least six weeks earlier a massive light was seen near the property. Our investigations uncovered numerous details related to other sightings in the area, suggesting that Coonabarabran and the surrounding region have a rich UFO legacy.

SIDING SPRINGS ASTRONOMER SEES UFO

The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 11 January 1995 ran an article featuring a UFO sighting by Dr John Dawe, the manager of the Sidings Spring Observatory near Coonabarabran. Dr Dawe is an internationally respected astronomer. The article stated that many months ago he was driving back from Sydney with his wife and daughter.

'We were going up a hill near Merriwa, at the top of the Hunter, when I happened to look up at the sky. There was a uniform, grey cloud cover, but suddenly something seemed to detach itself, hover for a while, then fall vertically very quickly below the brow of the hill. I yelled an expletive, which made everyone take notice. My wife saw the same thing, but by the time we got to the top we couldn't see anything.

'My tentative explanation was that it was a weather balloon. But it was grey, rather than silver, and was elliptical horizontally, not vertically'.

Dr Dawe was quoted as saying it was 'classic stuff . . . It was something I still cannot explain. But I am 99.99 per cent certain it was nothing alien'.

A UFO LANDING ON HARWOOD ISLAND?

Two people holidaying on the north coast of New South Wales experienced an intriguing UFO encounter on 3 June 1995. Christine and Darryl were staying a caravan park on Palmers Island. At about 8 p.m. they had gone fishing 400 metres away

on the bank of the Clarence River. Across the river is Harwood Island, which has extensive sugar cane plantations, scattered housing and a sugar refinery. Darryl was using a new torch, which he waved up and down. A long, thin, white cigar-shaped light was noticed in the sky. It remained in the sky for about 15 minutes, until the light started diminishing in size, and then zigzagged up higher into an orange dot. For a further five minutes the couple were distracted by problems with snagged fishing lines. Then, emerging from area on the other side of the river, a large oval object rose from the ground and proceed towards the unnerved couple. It seemed to be huge. The earlier light increased in size. The object approaching from Harwood Island tilted on its side as it reached the river. It exposed a large under section, which had two circles of Taser bright orange light – one inside the other'. By then, the couple were terrified. They rapidly packed gear into their car and began to drive out of the area. They got back to the park by 9.20 p.m. Christine could not sleep until 4.30 a.m. and Darryl suffered from bad nightmares. Their dog began vomiting and had to be taken to the vet four days after the event. Two weeks after the encounter, the couple returned to Harwood Island with Christine's father, to search the area where the strange object appeared to have risen from. In an area that appeared to be consistent with the object's initial presence, they found a large area of depressed sugar cane. The outer 'walls' of the depressed are were intact all the way around. There did not seem to be any sign of footprints or tyre tracks.

The north coast is my home territory. The locality of Palmers Island and the landing on Harwood Island made me recollect two events. One has already been related on page 125. The other provides a startling coincidence. Exactly 20 years to the day, on 3 June 1975, the same area was the scene of a UFO close encounter. At 7.30 p.m. two young men visiting three other men on the Yamba Road to Palmers Island noticed a bright red and green object approaching from the west. When it appeared to hover nearby, the group began to watch it closely. All five men followed it by car as the object began to move off in the direction of the road to Palmers Island. After travelling over a bridge, the UFO approached the car and hovered within 200 metres, at the

beginning of a long straight stretch in the road. It appeared to be about 10 metres wide and disc-shaped. Then the lights on it dimmed. As the car closed in, the object shot off down the straight at high speed and appeared to hover at the end of it, as if waiting for the car. It then zig-zagged across the road, eventually moving across the Clarence River and hovering above trees in the sugar cane fields on Harwood Island. The object went down twice, dimming and revealing a definite disc shape. Then the object moved to the left fading or landing behind the sugar cane storage sheds. No landing nests were found in this area, however farmers reported disturbances amongst the dogs and animals. Fishermen at Yamba reported seeing a fast moving light travel from the ocean horizon to Yamba at about the beginning of the Palmers Island close encounter. I was able to interview three of the men on 7 June, on location.

Other intriguing sightings also occurred on the north coast at that time, including a 5 June sighting of a ball of orange light, apparently flying parallel to power lines, near South Grafton. TV interference over a wide area was reported during the sighting.

PORT ARTHUR

The following incident occurred on the Tasman Peninsula on 29 August 1995. David Main (a pseudonym) was travelling by car, heading east, en route to historic Port Arthur from Nubenna to Collect his daughter. Some eight kilometres east of Port Arthur, Main noticed a bright mass of white light apparently about a kilometre to the south. He thought it was a reflection in the car's windscreen, but he noticed that the car 'played up' a bit, until the light finally vanished in the distance ahead of him. Main thought no more about it, until about an hour and a half later, around 9.30 p.m. He was returning along the same road, heading west. About five kilometres west of Port Arthur, Main saw what he thought was the same light mass. Just as he passed the Radnor turn-off, the bright white cigar-shaped UFO appeared to the south and seemed to accompany them for several kilometres. As they neared Marsh Road, an isolated stretch of road and

the location of the earlier sighting, Main's car began to miss, then all the lights went out, the power failed, with the engine cutting out, and the car radio and clock stopped. The UFO had now stopped in the sky just south of the road, at what seemed to be a distance of about 200 metres. Even with the proximity of the strange object hanging in the sky, Main, a mechanic of 16 years experience, decided to he had to get out of the car and try to see what was wrong with the car. By torch light he checked under the bonnet and could find no explanation for the problems. With his children present and the UFO so close by Main began to get worried. The object had started to move to the west. Main tried to start the car again, and this time it started immediately. He quickly jumped out and closed the bonnet and drove off. The cigar-shaped object seemed to dwindle in size and was eventually lost from view. The car had recently had a new engine, battery and new tyres. He was unable to find out anything wrong with the car and has not experienced any similar problem since.

CENTRAL COAST UFO FLAP

The Central Coast area of New South Wale was the focus of an intense outbreak of UFO activity in late 1995. The local *Sun Weekly* reported that on 28 December 1995 Gosford Police Station was inundated with calls from perturbed residents. Sergeant Bob Wenning was quoted as saying, 'I took dozens of calls from people all describing the same thing. People said they had been woken up by an intense humming noise. When they looked out over the water, they saw a large cylindrical object with a polished metal ball-like bottom. The craft hovered above the water line. The heat from its (five) lights was turning the water to steam. Because we had so many calls, we sent all available cars to the area to investigate. When our officers got within 50 metres, the craft appeared to shut down and disappear. The object didn't fly away in a straight line—it was as if you had a torch beam and whipped it around. Some of our radio controllers were convinced we were being raided. I've experienced

nothing like it—people were genuinely frightened'.

I spoke with Sergeant Wenning to establish the accuracy of the newspaper account. He indicated that the reports had actually occurred on 30 December. He also pointed out that contrary to the impression given by the newspaper report, police saw nothing. Reports started coming in from midnight and continued intermittently until 4.30 a.m. He personally took a dozen calls, and in total some three dozen calls were received. The most interesting report came from an obviously frightened resident in Adelaide Street, East Gosford. He and his family had been woken up by dogs howling, a huge humming noise, like a million buzzing bees, and glimpses of a white light. He went outside to investigate and went right down to the water's edge within 100 metres of a massive object, with five huge brilliant white lights. He observed this object very close to the water and he said the water appeared to be boiling, frothing, or was being sucked up into the object. Sergeant Wenning spoke with this man and was certain his fear was genuine. Reports seem to come from around the Broadwater area and Brisbane Water. All seem to have involved objects on or above the water or near the water's edge. A general support officer, who works at the station, said she was with her family, on the expressway, slowing down for the Gosford interchange. She observed a brilliant light mass darting about the Broadwater area. She said there were lots of cars slowing down to see the light display.

A LANDING

A woman and her married daughter travelling by car on the Federal Highway between the Sutton turnoff and just after the Collector turnoff had a series of unusual sightings of apparent UFOs. The observations occurred intermittently between 8.45 p.m. and 9.20 p.m. on 14 January 1996. The two women had noticed a very bright light mass in the sky, which soon seemed to be coming down at a steep angle. Its path made the two concerned that they might intersect with it on a collision course. The mother urged her daughter to slow down lest it crash on top

of them. The light mass then seemed to be suddenly upon them at roughly two telegraph pole heights. At that point it appeared to have a structure and an unusual arrangement of non-flashing coloured lights. The daughter wound down her window to listen for any sound, but could not pick up any from the UFO. A shower of what seemed to be sparks was coming down out of the object. The daughter was concerned that a four wheel drive vehicle ahead of them may have some of this material come down on it, but the vehicle sped up and the aerial object passed behind them. They were able to keep it in view at various times, but lost it when they travelled past Lake George. They stopped at a roadside rest point and were able to watch its movements about the sky. When it seemed to move towards them, the couple sped away. It followed for a time, then the mother lost sight of it. At this point they had just passed the turnoff to Collector. The daughter glanced through the passenger side window. Her mother was in this seat, but was looking back behind them trying to keep an eye on the UFO. The daughter suddenly saw that apparently the same object was on the ground in a grass paddock, about 15 metres away off the road on the passenger side. She could see what looked like squarish windows or lights along its massive length. A smaller object seemed to be near it, also on the ground. She yelled at her mother who also saw it as they were slowing down. They stopped 150 metres down the highway. They could still see the object on the ground. The mother thought the 'windows' or 'lights' were more circular, and she did not see the second object. Another two cars had pulled up almost directly opposite the object's position in the paddock. The two woman then saw what seemed to be a single bright white light moving quickly up from behind. They were uncertain if this was from the object in the paddock or one of the cars with only one headlight. As they were now very frightened, they drove away at speed.

GRAFTON, 1996

On 10 April 1996 my home-town newspaper, the *Daily Examiner,* described a bizarre tale of a Grafton couple, Scott and

Wendy, who believe they were abducted by aliens on 16 March while driving from Lismore to Casino. Initially the couple only recalled seeing strange lights just before 8.30 p.m. Arriving home, they noticed that it was thirty or forty minutes later than they expected and that they had unusual and disturbing physical effects, such as marks, blisters and prickling sensations on their bodies. They contacted local UFO researcher Barry Taylor, who had reported his own local sightings of a V-shaped cluster of lights on 16 March. Suspecting an abduction episode, he organised for the couple to see a hypnotherapist. He confirmed to me that under hypnosis an account of UFO abduction involving alien encounters with at least three types of entities emerged: beings over two metres tall with large pointy ears, grey creatures with black, almond-shaped eyes, wearing silvery grey body suits, and beings with white, wrinkly faces. The couple indicated they felt it was a positive experience.

This marks the end of the historical survey of the Australian UFO experience. Reports of encounters with UFOs continue to pour in every week to researchers such as myself. One day, hopefully, a report will come in which, upon investigation, will at last provide an unarguable answer to the age-old question: 'Is anybody out there?'

CONCLUSION

I began this history with the Aboriginal element of the UFO mystery—stories of strange beings and even stranger stories of contact with them in the context of the Aboriginal shamanic tradition. It seems a long way between there and today's reports of UFOs and alien abduction. So I found it appealing that when Dr John Mack, the Pulitizer prize-winning author, Harvard professor of psychiatry, and UFO abduction researcher, visited Australia in early 1996, he met with both researchers and indigenous peoples. He brought with him film of his interview with Credo Mutwa, a Zulu shaman, who had also had an abduction experience.

More Aboriginal people are now coming forward to tell of possible UFO or abduction-related experiences. For example, Lorraine Mafi-Williams, who has been described as a storyteller and 'liaison officer' for the spiritual truths of her Githebul group from the Bundjalung tribe, has revealed to me some of her perceptions of these intrusions into both aboriginal and western lives.

'Our attitude to what goes on up in the heavens is what rules us Aboriginals. It's similar to religion, whereby Christians believe in a religious world ruled by one God, but many saints, we believe the same, only the many saints to us are planetary ones

whom you in the Western world refer to as ET or aliens. We call them Wandjinas and Mimi Spirits, and have done so for thousands of years, until 1788, when an English concept of the above was interestingly enough (found to be) parallel to what we have practised for eons; that we commonly refer to as our Dreamtime, that began in the Milky Way'.

Lorraine suggests that communication from these beings continues and cites her own experiences with her 'old friend' since the age of 12. She feels she is an 'abductee'. 'My dear old friend took me up, yes in a UFO, but a different sort to the Western beliefs'. Her experiences were more spiritually orientated. She adds, 'I went through all or nearly what abductees did. We believe in UFOs, but here too we have the Aboriginal concept and belief, and we know about abductions and why'.

Lorraine has, over a number of decades, courageously tried to act as a bridge between western and Aboriginal cultures, to improve understanding between both. In doing so, she has occasionally drawn the ire and prejudices of both cultures.

In 1996 John Mack, Harvard University professor of psychiatry and author of the book *Abduction*, and his assistant, Dominique Callimanopulos, visited Australia to lecture and to research Aboriginal abduction experiences. The following exchange occurred when I lectured with them one night in Sydney, and helps throw some light on the whole area of the nature of accepted truth in our society.

Dominique Callimanopulos: 'The real problem with this is, how do you define what knowledge is, and how do we know when we know something? You have the researcher who has his or her consciousness coming at an experiencer or abductee who is having a subjective experience. The whole interaction is not something you can repeat. So how do we know what takes place during that enquiry?'

Bill Chalker: 'As a scientist I would like to respond to the question about physical evidence and the need for physical evidence. Like it or lump it, the UFO experience (and the abduction experience) is a marginalised experience in human society. It

might be popularised by *The X-Files* and things like that, but essentially it is still seen as a fringe phenomenon. It is not generally accepted as a reality. Most of us on a day-to-day basis live in a physical reality, and that's why there is this emphasis on the search for physical evidence. But I find it interesting that indigenous cultures seem to be coming out and offering us some insights into this field, which they themselves seem to have been aware of for hundreds of years'.

John Mack: 'What Bill is slipping us slightly into here is what I've called the "politics of ontology". In other words, this is a political question he is hinting at, who decides in a given culture what is real or not. In this culture it isn't any longer so much the religious leaders, it is the scientists. In other words, the mainstream scientists tell us the methodologies, the criteria for reality that we are expected to go by. Mainstream notions of method and reality require that we get physical evidence, and I support this, I think we should get physical evidence. But I think we should be aware of the degree to which what is real is being determined on the basis of the consensus of a certain elite'.

The limited elaboration of the physical dimensions of the UFO phenomenon has progressed slowly, but some good work has been done, albeit under great difficulties. This should be expanded upon. Until serious, well funded and timely scientific investigation of bona fide UFO reports becomes the norm rather than the exception, the subject will continue to wallow in the marginalised fringe it is anchored in now. Most people seldom confront the rich basis of the UFO phenomenon. They are constantly exposed to a festival of the bizarre and the absurd. But we should not let the field be dominated by the most controversial and less substantiated aspects—and I include abduction aspects.

Some have argued that sufficient natural explanations for the UFO abduction mystery are already available. Others believe that abductions are real alien experiences. Others argue just as passionately that it is all rubbish. What is needed, I believe, is the recognition that it is far to early to rush to judgement with definite positions. What has been uncovered to date argues powerfully for caution and patience. We have a long

way to go, and much to discover along the way.

Throughout this book you have seen glimpses of 'something'. No doubt some are misinterpretations or insoluble misidentifications of prosaic or unusual known phenomena. Nevertheless, there are many events here that are the stuff of apparently genuine 'unknowns'. For example 1954—Nowra, 1959—Boianai, and 1980—Rosedale. The difficulty is that much of this material has been uncovered in a less than satisfactory way. This has been the remarkable legacy of both amateur researchers and forbidden science. The UFO phenomenon is still waiting to see the transition to serious open science.

What is needed is unfettered, substantial funding to do good science, not well-intentioned limited science that emerges from limited funding and part-time commitment. All too often we have a litany of lost opportunities, that have gone begging due to the lack of resources and an absence of focused scientific and multidisciplinary research. From time to time through the smokescreen of political and bureaucratic compromises, in both official and civilian efforts, we have seen glimpses of what might have been.

For now I wait, buoyed by the extraordinary dimensions of the UFO phenomenon, which this history has revealed to you. Given what has passed before us, I hope we do not give up the chance to properly confront and understand a fascinating and important mystery. A lot of Australians have already faced that mystery in a personal way. It is time we take up the challenge.

APPENDIX A

—a short history of UFO groups in Australia—

The understanding we have of the nature of the UFO mystery in Australia is largely due to the civilian groups and individual civilian researchers around the country. They have amassed an extraordinary database of material, much of which has been published. While it must be said that this material varies greatly in quality, a great deal of it contributes to the heart of the UFO enigma.

While the RAAF has undertaken investigations, these have lacked the commitment and rigour that many civilian researchers have tried to achieve. To put the RAAF efforts into perspective, consider the following. From 1950 to 1984, the RAAF dealt with about 1,612 reports, and from 1960 to 1980 another 1,258. These were the total figures for all of Australia. Yet in just one state, one of the best civilian groups in Australia, the Tasmanian UFO Investigation Centre, dealt with 2,131 reports up to 1980. These were restricted to its home state, which is of course the smallest in the country.

In July 1952 Edgar Jarrold began Australia's first civilian flying saucer organisation, the Australia Flying Saucer Bureau, in Sydney. By May 1953 the bureau was publishing the country's first UFO publication, the *Australian Flying Saucer Magazine*. In February 1953 the Australian Flying Saucer Investigation Committee was formed. It was an active group but after some impressive work disappeared from the scene by 1955. In South Australia, during 1953, the Australian Flying Saucer Club was started by Fred Stone. This later became the Australian Flying Saucer Research Society.

Much of the early activity in this country pivoted around Edgar Jarrold. With his departure from the field in 1955, independent

state groups developed. These included the UFO Investigation Centre in 1955 with Dr W.P. Clifford and from 1958 with Dr Miran Lindtner, the Queensland Flying Saucer Research Bureau (now known as UFO Research (Qld)), in 1956, with Stan Seers from 1957, and the Victorian Flying Saucer Research Society (now known as the Victorian UFO Research Society), with Peter Norris in 1957.

Attempts were made by the large state groups to cooperate in publishing activities and in the formation of a national group, the Commonwealth Aerial Phenomena Investigation Organisation. Both efforts were short-lived, largely due to disagreements between the states.

While in Australia during 1973, Dr Allen Hynek, one of the leading scientific investigators in the world, had discussions with local researchers to try to set up a local focal point of case material which could then be forwarded to his group in Chicago. Out of those discussions the Australian Coordination Centre for UFO Studies was formed by Harry Griesberg and David Seargent. The centre organised regular conferences, the first in 1975, from which a real sense of cooperation emerged between most of the state civilian groups and individual researchers. Known from 1980 as the Australian Centre for UFO Studies, it was a focus of major projects and documentation programmes. It was the most successful of the efforts at cooperation at a national level, but by the second half of the 1980s it had lost much of its momentum, when many of the leading researchers, tired of group politics and problems, opted for a more informal, networking approach. UFO Research Australia, formed by Vladimir and Pony Godic and Keith Basterfield, was the result. It has been successful in its efforts to encourage serious research on a less organised basis, and has pioneered the use of e-mail and bulletin boards by UFO researchers in Australia.

Vladimir and Pony Godic edited a digital book on UFO research in Australia and New Zealand, which was published in 1992. It brought together material published in Vladimir Godic's *UFO Research Australia Newsletter* through the 1980s. His untimely death in 1995 led to the closure of UFO Research Australia.

Today research is dominated by state-based groups named

above, each with its own focus and approach. Newer groups like Phenomena Research Australia, UFO Research (NSW), and the Independent Network of UFO Researchers, have arisen. Some researchers have preferred to act largely alone, with or without the assistance of fellow researchers.

With the recent interest in abduction research and investigation, support groups for experiencers, such as the UFO Experience Support Association and UFO Encounters & Support Line, have been created to provide different approaches relevant to the abduction experience. The Australian Abduction Study Centre was formed in 1994 to try to act as a communication forum for the diverse approaches in this area.

The proliferation of interest in the UFO field is well served by the variety of groups, networks, and individuals that are presently available. Their contributions are being supplemented by the influx of new people and approaches. While caution and a critical approach will always be needed, people interested in the field, and people who have had experiences, have a variety of options to choose from. The next appendix contains a list of contact points for the various groups around Australia.

APPENDIX B

—how to report a UFO experience—

Bill Chalker, the author of this book, can be contacted care of the UFO Information Centre. If you have information that may add to any of the reports described in this book, or any reports like them, he would be most interested to receive it. Bill is a contributing editor to the highly regarded publication, the *International UFO Reporter,* which is available from the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60659, USA.

BOOKSHOPS

Esoteric Bookshop 408 Elizabeth St Surry Hills 2010 Australia; Arcturus Books Inc. 1443 S.E. Port St. Lucie FL 34952 USA (Both shops also sell by mail order).

GROUPS

New South Wales

UFO Investigation Centre
PO W42 West Pennant Hills NSW 2125
Loose networking approach; investigation and research of full range of UFO phenomena; extensive files maintained; information disseminated through a variety of outlets; lectures available upon enquiry; no formal membership available.
Contact: Bill Chalker.

UFO Experience Support Association,
PO 191 Regents Park NSW 2143
Provides support for people who have had abduction experiences, or think they might have; publishes the UFO Support Group Newsletter; undertakes investigation and research; organises public lectures and provides resources.
Contact: Peter Khoury

Independent Network of UFO Researchers
PO 783 Kogarah NSW 2217
Network of independent researchers; publishes the
INUFOR Digest
Contact: Moira McGhee.

UFO Research (NSW)
PO Q95 Queen Victoria Building Sydney 2000
Public group with membership; publishes the UFO Reporter
Contact: Bryan Dickeson.

Victoria

Victorian UFO Research Society
PO 43 Moorabbin Victoria 3189
Public group with membership; publishes the Australian UFO Bulletin
Contact: Judy Magee.
Phenomena Research Australia
PO 523 Mulgrave North Victoria 3170
Publishes the PRA Journal; investigates UFOs and other unusual phenomena
Contact: John Auchettl

UFO Encounters & Support Line
PO 1309 Vesper Drive Narre Warren Victoria 3805
Support group
Contact: Diane Allan

UFO Experience Support Group,
PO 138 Upper Ferntree Gully Victoria 3049
Support group and abduction research
Contact: Brenda Butler

Anomaly Research Centre
104 Howitt St Ballarat Victoria 3350
Investigation of anomalies, including UFOs; specialist and inter-disciplinary research projects; information exchanges
Contact: Mark Moravec

Tasmania

Tasmanian UFO Investigation Centre
PO 174 South Hobart Tasmania 7004
Investigation and research of reports; publishes newsletter and UFO annual
Contact: Keith Roberts

South Australia

The Australian UFO Abduction Study Centre
PO 1894 Adelaide South Australia 5001
Research into UFO abductions; information and referral service; publishes newsletter
Contact: Keith Basterfield
Australian International UFO Flying Saucer Research
PO 2004 Adelaide South Australia 5001
UFO investigations, public membership, publication
Contact: Colin Norris

UFO Research
PO 281 Blair Athol SA 5084
UFO investigation and research; information resource
Contact: Ray Brooke

Western Australia

UFORUM
36 Loris Way Kardinya Western Australia 6163
UFO investigations and research
Contact: Brian Richards

Queensland

UFO Research
PO 222 50 Albert St Brisbane Queensland 4002
UFO investigation and research; publishes UFO Encounter
Contact: Sheryl Demichelis

UFO Research (Far North Queensland)
PO 1585 Cairns Queensland 4870
UFO investigation and research
Contact: Russell Boundy

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FSR *Flying Saucer Review*
UFORAN *UFO Research Australia Newsletter*
For other acronyms see Appendix B

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——, 'Australia's Aborigines have long known about UFOs', *Flying Saucer Review*, Vol 39, No 3, 1994, United Kingdom, FSR Limited
Worms, E.A., 'Djamar, the Creator', *Anthropos*, XLV, 1950
Wyatt, Ransome, *The History of Goulburn*, Sydney, Lansdowne Press, 1972

NOTES AND REFERENCES

The Oz Files: 'Oz' is a colloquial expression meaning Australian. My friend Jenny Randles also coined the term 'the Oz factor' for the 'sense of timelessness and sensory isolation' that many UFO witnesses experience. 'The witness feels the UFO has temporarily sucked him into a kind of void where only he and the phenomenon coexist'. Jenny took her sense of the word 'Oz' from the fantastic Land of Oz, of *Wizard of Oz* fame.

In what follows the words at the beginning of each entry, before the colon (:), refer to words on the relevant page.

INTRODUCTION

1 In 1988 a Saulwick opinion poll: 'Why half of Australia is waiting for a sign from the sky', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 July, 1988.

1 Way back in 1955: Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding's quote comes from his article, 'I believe in Flying Saucers', *Fate*, January, 1955, 5.

2 We can define the UFO: Hynek 1972, 10.

3 This book: While this is the first detailed history of UFO sightings in Australia other mainstream books have appeared, namely Holledge 1965, Tambling 1967 and 1978, Hervey 1969 and 1975, Pinkney and Ryzman 1980, Killey and Lester 1980, Startup 1980, Basterfield 1981, Dykes 1981, Fogarty 1982, Seers 1983, Stott 1984 and (in digital disk form) Godic, 1992. These books vary greatly in detail, focus, and style.

3 In June, 1996: Personal files; See local area papers, including *Daily Examiner* (Grafton) and *Northern Star* (Lismore); Hervey 1969, 54–55.

3 national prominence: *Daily Examiner*, 19, 21 and 22 April, 1969; Personal communications with Ian Robinson, MHR, and G. Testa; Notes and material courtesy of G. Testa.

4 In mid afternoon: Personal files.

4 "angel hair": Basterfield 1981, 22–30; Hill 1995, 237–244; Clark 1992, 44–47.

5 Witnesses of the strange occurrences: Vallée 1992, viii.

6 Someone suggested I approach Dr. Keith Bigg: Letter from Dr Bigg to author, 20 June 1973.

6 Newton's Sleep: Klonsky 1977, 10–11.

6 From time to time: This quotation comes from his March 26, 1968 lecture, "Are UFOs Extraterrestrial Surveillance Craft?", to the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, International Hotel, Los Angeles; quoted in Seers 1983, 164.

CHAPTER 1: THE EXTRAORDINARY ABDUCTION OF KELLY CAHILL

Kelly Cahill contacted me on October 4, 1993. I referred her to John Auchettl of Phenomena Research Australia. The material in this chapter is based on my extensive communications with Kelly Cahill and John Auchettl. My associate Robb Tilley recorded a detailed interview with Kelly Cahill on March 21, 1994 from which the extensive quotes are drawn. I wrote a detailed article on the incident entitled 'An extraordinary encounter in the Dandenong foothills' which appeared in the *International UFO Reporter*, September/ October, 1994. Kelly's own book *Encounter* is to be published by HarperCollins in 1996.

CHAPTER 2: THE ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCE

17 There are incidents in many great religious accounts: Downing 1973; Thompson 1993.
17 the Wandjina: Crawford 1968; Mowaljarlai and Malnic 1993.
18 The Aboriginal tribe: Worms 1950; Eliade 1973.
18 According to Bundjalung: Burnum Burnum 1988, 80.
19 Amongst the powers: Elkin 1977; Eliade 1974, 50.
19 A.W. Howitt in his: Howitt 1904.
19 Because of the many similarities: Chalker 1990; Ring 1992.
20 Australian mysteries: Gilroy 1995, 29.
21 Antonio Villas Boas: Lorenzen 1967, 42–72; Bowen 1969, 200-238; Clark 1992, 392–395.
21 The famous Betty and Barney Hill abduction story: Fuller 1966 and 1981; Spencer 1989, 47–72; Story 1980, 172–177.
21 Powerful Beings: Mountford 1976, 448–483.
21 An Australian anthropologist: Wolfe 1992, 22–23 and 1994, 12-13.
21 John Kernott: Interviewed by Bill Chalker, September, 1993.
22 Some of this information: Devereux 1990, 184–208; Devereux 1992; Budden 1995; Chalker 1990; Harner 1980.

CHAPTER THREE: 1788 to 1945—THE ARK IN THE SKY

23 *An Account of the English Colony*, Collins 1804, 211.
23 A machine to go through the air: Chalker, 1982.
27 The Goulburn ghost light: the *Goulburn Herald*, 16 March 1878;Wyatt 1972, 75
27 A 'remarkable meteor': *Nature*, Vol. 20. 121, 5 June 1879; Fort 1974, 235; Chalker 1985, 33.
27 Ghost lights: Chalker 1985, 33–34.

27 An early astronomer's sighting: Chalker 1985, 34.
29 THE WAVE OF 1909: Chalker 1992, 333–336, in Clark 1992.
32 AN EARLY VISITOR: Chalker 1988, 72–80; based on interviews with primary witness during 1985 and 1986.
34 FRANCIS CHICHESTER: Chichester 1967, 185.
35 MILITARY MATTERS: Chalker 1985, 37–38.
36 THE 'LITTLE FELLAS': Mrs Church's report was originally investigated by Bruce Harding with an account published in A.P.R.G (NZ) Journal 1974, pages 11–14.

CHAPTER FOUR: EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE—ERRORS, HOAXES AND SCIENCE

The UFO Handbook by Allen Hendry (Sphere, 1980), *Observing UFOs* by Richard Haines (Nelson Hill, 1980) and *UFO Study* by Jenny Randles (Hale, 1981) are excellent resources for investigating and evaluating the UFO phenomenon.
39 Dr Allen Hynek: Hynek 1972.
41 The 1980 Rosedale landing: Chalker 1988, 11–12; Chalker 1987, 193–194.
43 An early morning UFO: Investigation by Bill Chalker (UFOIC) and Peter Khoury (UFOESA).
46 Three Stage Hypnosis: See Richard Haines' paper 'A "Three Stage Technique" to help reduce biasing effects during hypnotic regression', Journal of UFO Studies, New Series, Chicago: The J. Allen Hynek Centre for UFO Studies.
46 Dr Allen Hynek: Dr. Hynek's statement comes from his article "The 10 best cases' in *Frontiers of Science*, May-June, 1981, Washington: CUFOS; Chalker 1987, 195.
47 Trans-en-Provence: Velasco 1987, 51–67; Hough and Randles 1994, 204–206.

CHAPTER FIVE: 1945 to 1953—THE MYSTERY OF THE DRURY FILM

49 In October 1949: Letter to UFOIC, 1967.
50 William McMahon: *Hansard* 13 August 1952
51 The chief test pilot: Department Civil Aviation UFO files examined by Bill Chalker at the Bureau of Air Safety Investigation in 1982.
52 In July 1952: Chalker 1992, 339.
53 THE HOLY GRAIL: Tom Drury's sightings details were drawn from a statement by TAP. Drury which appears in 'Flying Saucers over Papua' by the Reverend Norman EG. Cruttwell, MA, *Flying*

Saucer Review, Special Issue No 4, August 1971, 3–4; Statement by TAP. Drury as quoted in memorandum for Mr J. S. Arthur, Regional Director, DCA, Port Moresby, dated 31 August 1953, in DCA files examined by Bill Chalker in 1982; *South Pacific Post*, Port Moresby, 2 September 1953; See also 'Summary of the effort made to rediscover present whereabouts of the allegedly "excised" frames of Mr T. Drury's famous 1953 movie film of the Port Moresby "UFO sighting"', 1966 Directorate of Air Force Intelligence file examined by Bill Chalker in 1982; Interviews with Tom Drury and Papua New Guinea ASIO agents by Bill Chalker in 1982.

CHAPTER SIX: GOVERNMENT COVERUP?—THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE AND THE RAAF FILES

I examined the RAAF UFO files during several visits from 1982 to 1984. The files are now held in Defence Archives, Canberra. All files quoted are from copies held by myself. Readers wishing to pursue further details on the RAAF files can start with the following list of my articles:

'The RAAF Investigation of UFOs', MUFON UFO Journal, No. 143, January, 1980, 3–6. This article first appeared in the ACOS Bulletin, No 20, August, 1979, and appeared most recently in 'UFOs over Australia', ACUFOS, 1985.

'UFOs and the RAAF—the Inside Story', UFORAN, Vol 3, Nos 2, 3 and 4, March-April, May-June, and July-August, 1982. This article appeared in abridged form in the MUFON UFO Journal, Nos 175 (Sept. 1982) and 176 (Oct. 1982).

'UFOs: Australia's Secret Documents Revealed', *OMEGA Science Digest*, Sept.-Oct. 1982. This article appeared in the APRO Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 10 (Oct. 1982) and Vol 30, No. 11 (Dec. 1982) as Australian A.F. UFO Report files.

'The RAAF Files', Journal of ACUFOS, Vol. 3, No. 3, May/June, '82 and UFORAN, Vol. 3, No. 4, July-Aug. 1982.

'Study of Official Australian Government Involvement in the UFO controversy—A progress report', An ACUFOS Bulletin Appendix, 1983.

'The UFO Connection—Startling Implications for NW Cape and Australia's security', *OMEGA Science Digest*, March/April, 1985. This article along with Addendum (letter) appeared in FSR, Vol. 31, No. 5, July, 1986.

'Yes, There is a UFO Cover-up', *OMEGA Science Digest*, Nov/Dec. 1983.

'The North West Cape Incident: UFOs and nuclear alert in Aus-

tralia', IUR, Jan/Feb, 1986, Vol. 11, No. 1.
'Working with the Government', in Spencer/Evans Phenomenon, Futura, 1988, and Avon, 1989.
'History of Involvement of Official Government Organisations', in The *Australian UFO Experience*, ACUFOS, 1988.
71 Ken Llewelyn: Llewelyn 1991

CHAPTER SEVEN: 1954 to 1958—NAVY PILOT SHAMUS O'FARRELL
74—64 The 1954 'saucer invasion': Fischer and Bristol 1978; Chalker 1992, 341–342.
81 THE SEA FURY ENCOUNTER: I interviewed Shamus O'Farrell on a number of occasions; the quoted material was drawn from an interview by Robb Tilley and me on 30 March 1993; I also interviewed Dr Allen Hynek and Dr John Farrands; The Directorate of Naval Intelligence released their file material on the Sea Fury incident to me in 1982; see also Chalker 1992, 342.
84 Radar at the restricted Woomera: This information came from Harry Turner in interviews I conducted with him in 1982 and on a number of occasions since then.
84 – 86 THE WAVE OF 1957: Chalker 1992, 346–347.
85 Air Marshall Sir George Jones: *Daily Telegraph*, 4 January 1958; Interview with George Jones by Bill Chalker, 9 December 1988.
85 During September: Randles 1987, 94–96; Chalker 1985, 120.
86 classic 'car pacing': Chalker 1992, 347–348; *UFO Bulletin* 1958 (UFOIC).

CHAPTER EIGHT: 1959—38 WITNESSES IN NEW GUINEA
89 In the 1950s: Ellwood 1995, 176–183, in Lewis 1995.
90 Airline pilot Bruce Cathie: Cathie 1968; Cathie 1995.
91—98 THE BOIANAI VISITANTS: This section is based on Reverend Gill's own written statement prepared on location in 1959 and interviews with Gill I undertook, in particular in 1978; See also 'Papua/Father Gill revisited', *International UFO Reporter*, November and December, 1977 (CUFOS) and Jerome Clark, 'Close Encounters: History's Best Case', *Fate*, February 1978.
98 VISITANTS AT BLENHEIM: Dykes 1981, 34–38; Stott 1984, 123–126; Chalker 1992, 349–350.

CHAPTER NINE: THE 1960s—THE VICAR OF CRESSY
103 THE CRESSY AFFAIR: The Cressy material comes from RAAF file series 580/1/1 (1960 holdings); Dr McDonald's quotes

come from his paper, 'UFOs – an international scientific problem', presented at the Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute Astronautics Symposium, Montreal, Canada, March 12, 1968; TUFOIC have produced an investigation document entitled 'Cressy Revisited' based on their retrospective study of the Cressy UFO flap; see also the *Launceston Examiner*, October 10, 18 and 29th, 1960.

106 THE WILLOW GROVE ENCOUNTER: See RAAF 580/1/1 file series (1963 holdings).

109 Underwater: See RAAF 580/1/1 file series (1964); See Sanderson 1973 for a more detailed treatment of underwater mysteries.

110 THE BOUGAINVILLE REEF INCIDENT: UFO Research (Queensland) circulated a number of documents related to this affair in a UFO conference paper entitled Flying Saucers presented in 1980, namely a letter from John Meskell to the group, dated 28 July 1965, *Brisbane Truth* article on the affair dated 31 July 1966, Correspondence with VUFORS, a CAPIO Bulletin dated August, 1965, a response from the RAAF dated 18 August 1965; The statement quoted by Dr. Hynek appears in Hynek 1972; Interview with John Meskell by Bill Chalker, 1982; Good 1987, 163–165.

111 THE THING ON THE BEACH: *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney) 21 July 1965 (includes witness drawing); *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney) 25 July 1965; the *Sun* (Sydney) 20 July 1965; Holledge 1965, 12–14.

111 THE 1966 TULLY SAUCER 'NEST': The material presented is largely from the RAAF file 580/1/1 (1966) series; Seers 1983, 68–89 provides a good account of the affair except for the incorrect reference to anticlockwise reeds swirl; my report on the Tully affair was published in *Story* 1980 as 'Tully (Australia) "saucer nests"'; UFO Research (Queensland) published a report entitled 'Tully 1966' in September 1977; Russell Boundy and Holly Gorris undertook site investigations for me in 1990, which supplemented my own site investigations in 1973; See also *Australian Flying Saucer Review* (UFOIC edition) No.9, November 1966; I interviewed George Pedley on 3 October 1988 and on a number of other occasions.

114 The Burkes Flat close encounter: Chalker 1984 and 1987; I interviewed Ron Sullivan during 1980 by phone and in person and undertook a site investigation.

116 THE WESTALL SCHOOL SENSATION: The *Clayton Calender* was checked by the author and was also published in the *Australian Flying Saucer Review* (Victorian edition), No. 5, July, 1966; *Dandenong Journal*, 21 April 1966; Interview with Mrs A. by Bill Chalker, 1989; Interview with school prefect by Dr Ian Gordon,

copy on file, courtesy of Ian Gordon; personal investigations; Letter from Ray Fischer, VUFORS, 26 February, 1977.
121 Barry Morris: *Courier Mail*, March, 1967; Interview notes by Greg Ayling, UFO Research (Queensland); personal files.
124 THE CANTERBURY CLOSE ENCOUNTER: Dr. Duggin's report was in the RAAF 580/1/1 file (1967) series.
125 An extraordinary close encounter: correspondence with witness and subsequent investigation, 1973.
126 THE GREENACRE SIGHTING: Investigation report by David Reneke, UFOIC, 1979.

CHAPTER 10: THE 1970s—FREDERICK VALENTICH
131 One night during June 1970: Investigation by Bill Chalker; Chalker 1987, 190.
132 THE KEMPSEY-MACLEAY RIVER UFO HAUNTING: The then associate editor of the *Macleay Argus*, Patricia Riggs, was, and still is, of invaluable assistance. She made copies of her extensive files available to me. I undertook extensive investigations personally into the area. See Chalker 1977.
136 THE INTERRUPTED JOURNEY: See Chalker 1980 based on interviews with the Finnish couple by Bill Chalker.
138 Maureen Puddy: see RAAF files 580/1/1 (1972) series; See also Judy Magee, UFO over the Mooraduc Road in Bowen 1977, 72–78; Judy Magee, 'Maureen Puddy's Third Encounter', FSR, Vol. 24. No. 3, 1978; see also Bryan 1995, 70–74.
140 THE MOUNT BUTLER INCIDENT: Investigation by Bill Chalker 1972–73; personal files.
141 Elizabeth C: Investigation by Bill Chalker, Robb Tilley and Dominic Kelly, UFOIC, 1992.
143 THE TYRINGHAM-DUNDURRABIN AREA FLAP: Investigation by Bill Chalker; personal files.
153 ENCOUNTERS AT NORAH HEAD: Investigations by UFOIC (1973 incident by Bill Chalker and 1975 by David Buching).
155 NORTH WEST CAPE: See Chalker 1985; Hall 1978, 184; the military UFO reports come from the RAAF file 580/1/1 (1973) series; the NSA documents are described in detail in Fawcett and Greenwood 1984, 180–191, Blum 1990, 79– 82, and Good 1987,

412–422.

160 Lake Sorell: TUFOIC Investigation

160 Near Nebo: RAAF file 529/1/3 (1975) series.

162 A remarkable close encounter: UFOIC investigation by Bill Chalker.

162 Kettering: TUFOIC Investigation; Roberts and Stevens 1978, 18–21.

163 THE BENBOYD FILM: UFOIC investigation by David Reneke and Bill Chalker; Reneke 1980.

164 THE LEITCHVILLE-ECHUCA FLAP: VUFORS investigations, see *Australian UFO Bulletin* for late 1977 and 1978; *Australian UFO Newsletter*, 54 and 55, 12–16.

165 THE GISBORNE UFO FLAP: Dickeson 1978a, 8–19; Dickeson 1978b, 14–17; Dykes 1981, 46–49; Detailed retrospective investigation by Keith Basterfield and Bill Chalker 1989–91; 3 stage hypnosis regression with "Betty" was undertaken by a clinical psychologist in my presence on 22 October 1989.

168 UFO SHOOTOUT: see UFOs terrorising the outback, Sunday Sun (Brisbane), 5 November 1978; I interviewed John and Murray Beadmore on 7 November 1978; Greg Ayling undertook an on site investigation during January, 1979; Ayling 1979.

169 THE DISAPPEARANCE OF FREDERICK VALENTICH: Chalker 1980; Chalker 1984; Killey and Lester 1980; Haines 1987; Good 1987, 170–177; Randles 1988, 15–40; See also VUFORS investigations reported in *Australian UFO Bulletin*.

172 UFO FALLOUT OVER NEW ZEALAND: Startup with Illingworth 1980; Chalker 1980, 12–18; Dykes 1981, 50–100; Fogarty 1982; Stott 1984, 96–122

CHAPTER 11: THE 1980s—THE KNOWLES FAMILY

175 The Gippsland region: Investigation by VUFORS; see *Australian UFO Bulletin*, December, 1980, and the *Australian Annual Flying Saucer Review*, June 1981, 9–10, 14, 15; Investigations by Keith Basterfield, Bill Chalker and Gary Little; See Basterfield and Chalker, Rosedale, Victoria – a close encounter, UFORAN, 2:1, Jan-Feb. 1981, 17–22, and Chalker and Basterfield, 'The Rosedale Landing with Physical traces', FSR, 26:6, 1981; Chalker 1987, 193-194.

178 NOT SO 'ALIEN HONEYCOMB': This section title is based on a title by Paul Hebron, of UFO Research (Qld), who undertook extensive personal research into the affair, which supplemented my own research; Pinkney and Ryzman 1980; Chalker 1981, 12–15.

178 The next major wave: Chalker 1988, 13.
179 THE MELTON-ROCKBANK UFO SECURITY BREACH: VUFORS investigations; see Auchettl 1983, 1–6; RAAF files AF84/3265 (1983) series; I interviewed Sgt. Harman and Constable Ellens on 22 July 1983.
181 The intelligence world: Ball 1980, 41–42; Richelson and Ball 1985, 190–191.
181 Strange events: Chalker 1988, 13, 32.
182 THE MERCEDES MYSTERY: TUFOIC investigation; Chalker 1988, i-ii; Roberts 1989, 10–12.
183 THE KNOWLES FAMILY: The most detailed treatment of this affair is John Auchettl's report originally compiled for VUFORS entitled The Knowles Family Encounter, produced in 1989, and also available through John Auchettl's organisation PRA; the UFO Research Australia network produced a comprehensive Mundrabilla report through Keith Basterfield who can be contacted for copies; see also Basterfield and Brooke 1989, 3–9; Chalker 1988, ii-vi; Norman 1989, 140–162 in Good 1989.
189 In Endeavour Hills: Auchettl 1990, March, 11–19.
189 During December 1989: Auchettl 1990, June, 11–15, 18–20; Auchettl 1990, September, 21–30.

CHAPTER 12: ABDUCTIONS
191 Canberra 'snails': Chalker 1976, 31–32.
193 Nildottie, South Australia: Investigation by Colin Norris; personal communication from Colin Norris.
194 A most confronting case: Investigation by Colin Norris; personal communication from Colin Norris; See also Kevin McNeil's account of this case in 'The Clifton Bore Incident', *Australian UFO Bulletin*, September, 1983.
195 VISITORS IN THE COUNTRY: personal investigation by Bill Chalker; Strieber 1988, 121–122; Strieber 1955, 110–112.
197 WINIFRED CRAUSE: Investigation by Bill Chalker.
199 Peter Khoury: Peter Khoury's account comes from the UFO Experience Support Association information pack.
201 MEN IN BLACK: Investigation by Bill Chalker and Dick Warburton.
202 BIZARRE UFO "LIGHT' PHENOMENA AT KIAMA: Investigation by Bill Chalker; statement from primary witness "Graham".
206 The proliferation of literature on abductions: Mack 1995; Bryan 1995.

CHAPTER 13—the 1990s—SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH

207 Coonabarabran: Investigations by Bill Chalker and Robb Tilley.

208 A UFO LANDING ON HARWOOD ISLAND: McGhee 1995, 31–32.

209 Exactly 20 years to the day: Investigation by Bill Chalker; see UFOIC Newsletter (1975); It should be noted that the 1975 Yamba activity was predicted to a certain extent. The cyclic nature of north coast NSW activity in 1966, 1969, and 1972, allowed me to be confident that close encounter activity might take place there. The pattern persisted until 1978 and since has lapsed into less predictable occurrences.

210 PORT ARTHUR: TUFOIC investigation by Keith Roberts.

211 The Central Coast: Interview with Sgt. Bob Wenning by Bill Chalker; INUFOR investigations; Communication from Moira McGhee, INUFOR.

212 A LANDING: Investigation by Peter Koury and Matthew Favalaro of UFOESA and Bill Chalker of UFOIC.

213 GRAFTON, 1996: Investigation by Barry Taylor; see also Ant-like aliens abducted us, *Woman's Day*, April 29, 1996; The Grafton couple were also interviewed on the *Midday Show* on 30 April, 1996.

CONCLUSION

214 Our Attitude: Letter to Bill Chalker from Lorraine Mafi-Williams, 23 January, 1996.

216 The real problem: The exchange between Dominique Callimanopulos, John Mack and Bill Chalker is from the forum session on the UFO abduction experience presented by the Australian Transpersonal Association, in Sydney, on 4 February 1996. See Robb Tilley's review of the evening in Consciousness, Vol. 6 No. 2, Winter, 1966, 6—8. Consciousness is published by the Australian Transpersonal Association (P.O. Box 11 Phillip Mall, West Pymble, Australia, 2073).